DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 349 CS 216 906

AUTHOR	Groeber, Joan F.
TITLE	More Than 100 Tools for Literacy in Today's Classroom. K-College.
ISBN	ISBN-1-57517-143-0
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	256p.
AVAILABLE FROM	SkyLight Training and Publishing Inc., 2626 S. Clearbrook Dr., Arlington Heights, IL 60005 ($24.95). Tel: 800-348-4474 (Toll Free).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; Daily Living Skills; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Language Arts; Learning Activities; *Literacy; *Metacognition; Student Evaluation; *Study Skills; Vocabulary Development
IDENTIFIERS	Learning Environment

ABSTRACT

This book provides 108 activities to stimulate students to think about their own involvement in their education. Students must be able to think about and apply the information they acquire in the classroom to their lives outside of school. It presents practical information on metacognitive theory and reading and studying skills. The ready-to-use activities in the book are arranged according to preparation time: Simple Things To Do, Things That Take Effort, and For the Committed. The background portion of each activity provides the framework and purpose of the activity followed by instructions for conducting the activity. According to the book, not only do these activities inspire students to think about their own thinking, but they also help them become better readers and writers; these activities even enhance vocabulary acquisition and development and foster effective techniques for using resource materials. Also included in this comprehensive resource book are recommended assessment tools such as checklists, logs and journals, anecdotal records, and criteria-referenced tests. The book contains a wide variety of strategies for improving comprehension of fictional and nonfictional texts and for transferring life skills to the real world. (NKA)

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MORE THAN 100 TOOLS FOR LITERACY IN TODAY'S CLASSROOM

by
Joan F. Groeber

SkyLight
Training and Publishing Inc.

More Than 100 Tools for Literacy in Today's Classroom

Published by SkyLight Training and Publishing Inc.
2626 S. Clearbrook Dr., Arlington Heights, IL 60005
800-348-4474 or 847-290-6600
Fax 847-290-6609
info@iriskylight.com
http://www.iriskylight.com

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Indexer: Candice Cummins Sunseri
Production Assistant: Christina Georgi

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Printed in the United States of America.

LCCCN 98-61507
ISBN 1-57517-143-0

2291-10-98McN
Item Number 1701
ZYXWVUTSRQPONMLKJIHGFEDCBA
07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99   15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my loving family,
for their unconditional support and encouragement;
To my students, past and present,
for helping me to always see the light.

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Preface

Give a man a fish, feed him for a day;
Show [teach] a man how to fish,
feed him for a lifetime.
—Chinese Proverb

The seeds of this book were planted when I was in graduate school. Professor Steve Hansell asked those of us in his Foundations of Reading class to compile two lists: one detailing ten things we felt students should know when they left our classroom, and a second list outlining ten things every graduating high school senior should know.

As the class protested that a list this small could barely contain curriculum requirements for one grade level in a single subject area much less an entire thirteen-year education, I realized that Dr. Hansell was asking us to look beyond such limited tasks as, "recognizing the /ch/ digraph," or "counting to 200 by 5s," to a broader, metacognitive realm where the classroom becomes an environment in which students are taught how to "fish" mentally, and thus learn to "feed" their minds for a lifetime.

To fulfill Dr. Hansell's requirement—determining what students need to know to progress through the educational system with some measure of success—it became necessary to shift emphasis from identifying and examining those areas where students need remediation to analyzing successful, effective learners and the methods and strategies they employ to comprehend and respond to classroom materials. From that point, the goal becomes helping less experienced learners adopt these techniques, giving them the key to their long-term advancement.

Rather than providing a "tool kit" to fix what's wrong with a particular student's or group's performance, this book seeks to offer a clear blueprint for the acquisition of "life skills" based on what works for effective learners.

Joan F. Groeber
Springfield, OH
1998

Introduction

Tell me, and I forget
Show me, and I remember
Involve me, and I understand
—Chinese Proverb

Learning is an active process not an osmotic situation where vessels of limited information (students) are acted upon by those with a higher volume of knowledge (teachers). To involve students in the learning process, teachers must join them in the process, growing and learning alongside their students.

Through example and interaction, teachers provide students with essential learning tools that will serve them far beyond classroom walls. Metacognition, the process of "thinking about thinking," takes knowledge acquisition to a deeper level, where students learn to apply the information they acquire in the classroom to their lives outside of school. For example, a student who learns to use dictionary guide words is one step closer to producing well-edited written copy. This student, in the process, becomes a more effective communicator whose ideas will gain more attention due to their presentation.

Before meaningful learning can occur, teachers must identify a child's experience and use it as a foundation for the introduction of new concepts and ideas. So, too, learners must become more actively involved in identifying and expressing their experience and building upon it. Having organized their past experiences into a mental "card file," learners can analyze new concepts for similarities and differences to knowledge they already possess, then decide where to "catalogue" the newly acquired knowledge. To do this, learners must accept their responsibility as "colearners" in the classroom, and teachers must structure classroom activities to give students an equal partnership in their own learning.

Understanding the Four Ps of Language Instruction

To encourage students' discovery of what they know and how they can apply it to new information, teachers must design reading and study skills lessons that emphasize four specific areas: Purpose, Previewing, Predicting, and Prior Knowledge. Emphasis on these areas helps learners receive, process, and express their understanding of new ideas they encounter.

Purpose

Most students approach reading assignments without a clear understanding of their purpose for reading the text. They try to absorb even the smallest detail in a spongelike method that often results in "information overload" and subsequent "system failure," in other words, no comprehension. Proficient readers use visual cues such as titles, headings, and topic sentences to help determine purpose before they even begin reading. Having some idea of *why* they are reading enables them to filter the information in the text through this purpose, retaining some facts and concepts and discarding others.

Before beginning any reading assignment, students should know the answer to the following question: Am I reading to be entertained, to gather information, or to learn another person's point of view? Stories, poems, and plays are ordinarily written for the reader's enjoyment, while nonfiction and resource texts provide a wealth of information on a number of topics. Short articles, such as the type found in magazines and newspaper editorial pages, contain the author's point of view on a particular topic.

Of course, readers can learn from a work of fiction or be entertained by an informational book, but identifying and understanding their primary purpose creates expectations of the content and prepares readers to receive it.

Previewing

Previews of coming attractions at a cinema increase expectations of and interest in the upcoming feature. Newspapers use a similar technique, employing **bold** print or ALL CAPS headlines and captioned photos to attract readers and offer a glimpse of the accompanying story.

Previewing a text, a prereading technique, also increases reading comprehension. Chapter titles and illustrations, for example, offer valuable clues to the text's content. Rather than plunging into a text unprepared for what it contains, readers who preview the text prime themselves for reading and begin the connection so vital to comprehension—connecting the text to their own lives and what they already know.

Predicting

People make hundreds of predictions every day. When parents lecture that too many after-school snacks will spoil a child's dinner, they're making a prediction. When the school's janitor warns that someone will get hurt running in the newly waxed hallways, he's making a prediction, too.

To predict is to compare a set of circumstances with similar events in one's experience, to combine information one possesses with what one knows of a new situation to make an educated guess regarding the new situation's outcome.

Effective readers use their prior knowledge of how stories unfold to make predictions about upcoming events in a new story. While their guesses may not be completely accurate every time, they have a much clearer idea of what will happen than those readers who approach each story as a separate entity that bears no resemblance or connection to any other story they have read or heard in the past.

Prior Knowledge

Ask ten people to visualize *water* and describe what they see, and chances are their responses will be as unique as their fingerprints. Narrowing the image to *a container of water* will still yield answers ranging from *glass* to *bottle* to *pitcher* to *bucket*. Our experience greatly influences the manner in which we receive and process information.

While teachers have no control over the amount and nature of prior experience any child brings to the classroom, they can provide strategies that enable students to use this experience to enhance reading comprehension. The primary factors in using prior knowledge are organizing what is known—the available data—into specific, related categories and determining the data's relevance to new information. Asking students to relate their prior knowledge to what they read also requires them to analyze, make judgments, and draw conclusions—all mature thought processes.

Six Guidelines for Developing Effective Reading and Study Skills

Classroom activities and exercises must be not only learner-centered but geared to the development and mastery of students' decision-making and problem-solving skills. The activities in *More Than 100 Tools for Literacy in Today's Classroom* provide a starting point for teachers to develop their own activities based on the needs of their students. The metacognitive aspects of the exercises encourage students to reflect on what they did and what they learned and to discuss what they got out of the exercise. This helps students determine in what areas they need additional practice or experience and helps teachers focus future activities to address these areas. The reflection and discussion portions also reinforce the idea that students and teachers are learning together in the classroom.

While difficulty levels can vary, activities should share the following basic strategies rooted in metacognitive study.

Instruction in any given topic must begin at the learner's level of experience.

Since learners can read with real understanding only that which they already know, it is essential to identify learners' background knowledge and plan activities and exercises that build on the current knowledge base.

Long-term retention of any information occurs only when the information has meaning in the learner's life.

A person's long-term memory holds information only as long as it has relevance in his or her life. Therefore, when activities relate skills used in the classroom to skills used in daily life, students' chances of retaining the information increase.

Provide learners with tasks that go beyond simple recall.

As students acquire information, they need ample chances to manipulate the fresh knowledge, using it to draw conclusions and make predictions about future challenges.

Use strategies that invite a broad range of responses.

The "perfect" answer is, in many cases, unattainable and unrealistic; however, activities that encourage students to create solutions based on information they have gathered foster genuine understanding.

Understanding why and how we learn is an integral part of the learning process.

Correct responses are of little value if learners have no idea what led them to that choice. Activities that ask learners to substantiate their selections reinforce their understanding.

Failure is viewed as a step in the process.

Students can gain from their mistakes when they are encouraged to use the resulting knowledge acquired to develop a different strategy for solving a problem.

How to Use This Book

While the activities in *More Than 100 Tools for Literacy in Today's Classroom* have been developed around a language arts curriculum, they can be adapted easily to other subject areas. Focusing on the acquisition and enhancement of effective reading and study skills, this book consists of eight sections.

Section 1, Getting It Right from the Start, analyzes skills of effective learners and gives all students opportunities to "level the playing field" by employing these same techniques.

Section 2, Never-ending Stories, examines the elements and structure of fiction and helps teachers harness readers' prior knowledge to increase their comprehension and enjoyment of these works.

Section 3, Nonfiction: A Matter of Fact, acknowledges the often stark contrasts between fiction and nonfiction, then outlines techniques to demystify the art of nonfiction reading.

Section 4, Responding to What We Read, acknowledges the natural connections among reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The activities build on students' instinctive desire to talk, think, and write about what they read.

Section 5, Noteworthy Information, takes a close look at the vital role note-taking plays in reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and test performance and offers strategies to improve note-taking, studying, and listening skills.

Section 6, Vocabulary Builders, focuses on activities that foster recognition and understanding of new words and increase students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies.

Section 7, Exploring Resources, provides activities that promote effective use of the following reference materials: the dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, telephone directory, and newspaper.

Section 8, Testing 1-2-3, outlines effective strategies to enhance test preparation and performance. Knowing how to research and present information in a written or verbal format are essential skills for the learner's "toolbox."

Each section is divided into three parts: Simple Things to Do, Things That Take Effort, and For the Committed.

The activities in Simple Things to Do require little or no preparation and minimal explanation or teacher supervision. These activities are ideal for times when students must work independently or for use by a substitute teacher.

Things That Take Effort consist of activities that require some planning and preparation before classroom implementation. Although the activities found under this heading might require additional preparation and classroom time, they can be incorporated effectively into units of study found in conventional textbooks.

Both students and teachers should get their feet wet on some of the less complicated exercises before tackling activities found in For the Committed. Conscientious planning plays a major role here, as well as a flexibility in redefining such traditional classroom techniques as having projects that last no more than one to two periods, straight lecture format, and pencil and paper assessment.

The **Background** portion of each activity provides the framework and purpose of the activity. It is followed by instructions for conducting the activity. Additionally, some activities include a **Variation,** offering options to keep students motivated and interested; an **Enrichment,** challenging students to take the activity a step further; and **Teacher Tips,** providing educators with advice on helping students get the most out of the activity.

The materials required to complete the activities are simple and inexpensive. When items may not be standard issue in the classroom, such as graph paper, index cards, and transparency sheets, a **Materials** list accompanies the activity.

Assessment

Just as learners acquire knowledge through different channels, the methods for assessing depth of understanding must vary as well. In addition to the reflection and discussion portions of the activities in *More Than 100 Tools for Literacy in Today's Classroom*, the recommended assessment tools are checklists, logs and journals, anecdotal records, and criteria-referenced tests.

Checklists

When a unit of study comprises a number of shorter assignments culminating in a final assessment, an assignment checklist provides the students and teacher with a place to record the completion of each component. The students' checklists consist of a column of boxes, which they check as they complete each task. The teacher's checklist is a line for recording level of student mastery of each component. This form is also useful for completing the five-step writing process (previewing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing), with a separate editing checklist for grammatical changes.

Logs and Journals

For units that focus on student understanding of processes or the relationships that exist between two or more concepts, student-authored logs and journals are effective assessment tools. Here, students describe, in their own words, a particular process, for example, how blood travels through the body, providing the teacher with a clear idea of any gaps or weaknesses in student understanding. Teachers can write specific comments in the journals or highlight passages in the student writing where confusion occurs.

Anecdotal Records

Since many metacognitive activities do not require a written response, teachers need a method for measuring progress in these areas. Anecdotal records can take the form of short statements written by teachers (perhaps on index cards), regarding their observations of students' understanding during activities. The anecdotal records might also be organized into a criteria-based checklist in which the teacher lists specific skills students need to master during the activity and checks them off as students show evidence of mastery.

Criteria-referenced Tests

Criteria-referenced tests assess student mastery of facts the teacher considers essential for understanding of a particular concept. For example, incorrect responses on teacher-designed multiple choice and true/false tests indicate those areas where remediation, or, in the case of several students answering incorrectly, reteaching is necessary.

SECTION I

Getting It Right from the Start

> *Every truth has four corners. As a teacher, I give you one corner; it is for you as the learner to find the other three.*
>
> —Confucius

The ability to comprehend and respond to written material plays an increasingly important role in students' success as they progress through elementary school. As early as third or fourth grade, students must move from reading stories almost exclusively to dealing with the challenges of reading expository, or nonfictional, text with little or no formal training on how to adapt to the different format. One method teachers can use to ease the transition from narration to exposition is to use prereading activities with both types of text.

Prereading activities stimulate student interest and improve reading comprehension. In the primary prereading technique, previewing, students examine the "extratextual" aspects of written material, such as chapter titles and illustrations, before they begin reading for clues to the content of the text. When they preview fictional texts regularly, students can easily expand the previewing techniques to encompass the elements of nonfiction such as headings, topic sentences, sidebars, charts, graphs, review questions, and highlighted vocabulary words.

In addition to previewing, other prereading activities such as teacher-created "pretests" at the onset of a unit of study expose a picture of student prior knowledge of a particular topic. This picture is vital as reading comprehension depends on a meaningful interaction between the author's message and the reader's prior knowledge of the topic and of language in general. Through oral or written feedback, teachers learn students' interest in and previous experience with new concepts and can plan the depth and direction instruction must take to meet student needs most effectively.

On a less formal scale, class discussion before students read a work of either fiction or nonfiction also helps teachers determine student level of understanding of concepts that will appear in the text for that unit. Class discussion also stimulates interest in the subject and gives teachers planning group activities an idea of how to group students based on their prior knowledge.

The primary focus of this section is to provide prereading activities that get students thinking before actual reading takes place. When preparing prereading activities, keep the following guidelines in mind.

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Guidelines for Developing Prereading Activities

- Ask the students questions before they begin reading that help them focus on what they will read. See activities 2, 3, 7, 14, and 20 for sample prereading questions.
- Point out headings, illustrations, sidebars, and other features outside of the text that give clues to content and can enhance students' understanding of the text.
- Determine students' prior knowledge of a subject through class discussion or individual, written responses to a pretest before they begin reading. See activities 15, 16, 17, 21, and 22.
- Link the text students are reading to knowledge students already possess about the topic. See activity 6.
- Help students locate a meaningful connection between the text information and their daily lives. See activities 4, 5, and 9.
- Vary the presentation mode—written exercises, class and group discussions, and so on—of prereading activities to accommodate learners with different styles.
- Vary the activity format (individual, small group, whole class) to promote cooperative learning and analytical thinking skills.
- Vary the activities to accommodate text structure; for example, directed reading thinking activities (Stauffer 1969) work best with fiction, while KWL (know/want to know/learned) charts (Ogle 1986) work well with nonfiction.
- Use open-ended questions, particularly when asking students to predict the outcome of a work of fiction, to elicit more comprehensive student responses.
- Develop prereading activities with the desired type of response exercise in mind. For example, if the goal is for

students to respond in writing to the text, design a prereading activity that asks them to write. If the goal of reading a work of fiction is to increase student understanding of character development, create a prereading activity that examines story characters as opposed to one that looks, more generally, at all story elements.

#1

Simple Things to Do

What's in a Name

Background

Authors of fiction and poetry count on a catchy or thought-provoking title to appeal to their prospective audience. They create this title with great care to capture the essence of the material and provide clues about what they hope readers will come away with after reading the work.

Activity

Ask students to select a poem, short story, or novel to read alone or as a group. After they've read the work, have students compose a new title for it. Remind them that the title is the reader's first impression of the material, and if it is boring or misrepresents the work, the reader will be disappointed and less likely to return to that author for additional stories or poetry. Share the new titles as a class, discussing the reasons behind these choices.

Use questions such as the following to help students reflect on their decision-making processes.

- What piece(s) of information found in the text led them to create the title?
- How important is the number and/or order of words in a title in capturing readers' interest? Why do they think that is true?
- What expectations did the original title create for them?
- What expectations do they think the new title will create for readers?
- How is the new title the same as or different from the original title?
- What role does a title play in your own choice of reading material?

#2

Simple Things to Do

Heads Up

Background

Authors of nonfiction also use the work's title to stimulate the interest of prospective readers. The title offers a quick, inviting glance into what the text contains. Students can mine this gold nugget of information to learn more about what is coming in the pages ahead.

Activity

Before they begin to read a nonfictional text, ask students to convert chapter titles or the headings found within a chapter into questions. Depending on the length of the book and the grade level, focus on just the first chapter or cover the entire book. A book on earthquakes, for example, might have the following chapters: "Looking at the Earth," "Fault Lines," "The Causes of Earthquakes," "The Effects of Earthquakes," "Ring of Fire," "Underwater Earthquakes," and "Controlling Earthquakes." By converting these chapter titles into the following questions, readers identify their purpose for reading: to learn the answers to these questions.

- What does the earth look like?
- What are fault lines?
- What causes earthquakes?
- What are the effects of earthquakes?
- What is the ring of fire, and what does it have to do with earthquakes?
- How do underwater earthquakes occur?
- How can we control earthquakes?

As they read a chapter as a group or independently, remind students to look for the answer(s) to their title question(s) in the material. After they finish reading, discuss as a group the possible answers to the title questions.

Reflect: Did the questions help them think more clearly about what they were reading? Why or why not?

Teacher Tip

If students have trouble answering the questions, conduct a more guided activity, working with students to form the questions and identify the answers as they read aloud or silently. Repeat this modeling technique two or three more times, each time placing more responsibility for generating questions and finding answers with students.

#3

Simple Things to Do

Back to Front

Background

Review questions at the end of the chapter in some texts help students think about the important ideas in the passage. Located at the end of the chapter or section, however, they offer this insight after students have read the material. When students review the questions before reading the section, they can see what's important before they begin and can determine their purpose for reading the passage.

Activity

With students working independently or in pairs, have them turn to the end of a section in their nonfictional text and read the review questions found there. Have them select one question and read the text, seeking the response to this question. Have them note as they read which part of the text contained the information they needed to answer the question. Was it at the beginning? Many authors place the most vital information in the first few lines or paragraphs. Was it near the end? Authors often provide a summary statement to restate the most essential facts as an aid to the reader. Discuss the activity and students' findings as a class. Ask the class if reading the review questions first helped them understand the focus of the passage.

If students have trouble answering the review questions, break the questions down, focusing on key words and phrases in each question. Are students clear on the meaning of the terms? If not, work with students to identify the key term in each review question, then determine its meaning and its relationship to the concept presented in the text.

Variation

In the event the students' or teacher's text does not contain formal questions, compose some questions for students to use as they read.

#4

Simple Things to Do

Just Like Me

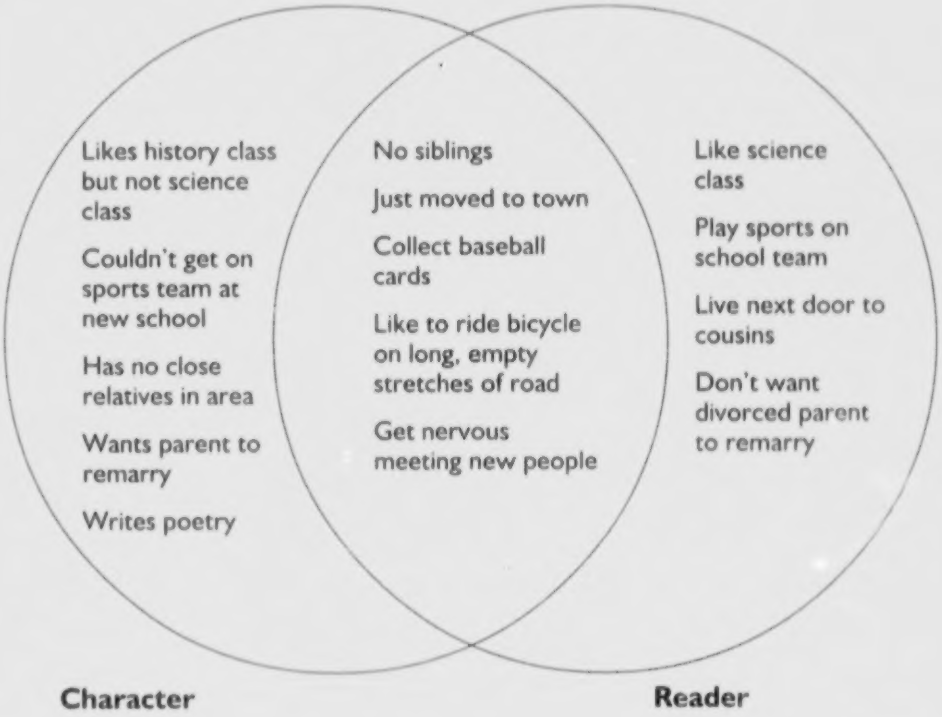
Background

Readers' understanding of a story increases if they are able to identify some link between themselves and the main character. In this way, they step into the story and view the events from a perspective of the reactions and emotions they share with the main character.

Activity

Ask students to think about the main character as they read a story. Have them answer the following questions: In what ways is that character similar to you? In what ways are the two of you different?

Have students create a Venn diagram to illustrate the results. When students, working independently or in pairs, create the diagram, they must make decisions about which pieces of information will fit in each section of the graphic. The process of categorizing and writing responses reinforces the purpose of the activity.


Likes history class but not science class
Couldn't get on sports team at new school
Has no close relatives in area
Wants parent to remarry
Writes poetry
No siblings
Just moved to town
Collect baseball cards
Like to ride bicycle on long, empty stretches of road
Get nervous meeting new people
Like science class
Play sports on school team
Live next door to cousins
Don't want divorced parent to remarry
Character
Reader

Enrichment

After they have read a number of books and diagramed several characters, have students select a character who is most (or least) like them and explain how they feel about this character and provide reasons why they feel as they do.

#5

Simple Things to Do

If I Were You...

Background

Students become more actively involved in reading a story if they have an opportunity to express their opinions about the characters' actions. They may, for example, have an approach to resolving the story conflict that is very different from that taken by the main character but very logical in their mind. This exercise is extremely valuable in gaining insight to student thought processes and motivation.

Activity

Ask students to envision themselves as the main character while they read. Then in a class discussion or written exercise, have them assume the identity of the story's main character and respond to questions such as the following, which help them focus on problem-solving skills.

- What, in your opinion, is the biggest obstacle or challenge you face? Why?
- How do you plan to tackle it? What is the first step you'll take?
- What special talents or abilities are necessary to solve this problem? Which, if any, of these skills do you possess?
- Whom can you rely on for help?
- How will your life change if you attain your goal? What will happen if you don't?

#6

Simple Things to Do

The More We Know

Background

Students are more likely to understand books and articles on topics that are familiar and interesting to them. Their knowledge and expertise in these areas enable them to use such thought processes as assimilation, the comparison of two or more ideas focusing on similarities, and accommodation, the comparison of two or more ideas focusing on differences, to manipulate the information. Mining prior knowledge is a key factor in understanding unfamiliar, more complex material.

Activity

Have students read an article about a subject they know something about and respond to the following questions: How does the information in this passage compare with what you already know? Does this article contain information that is completely opposite from what you know about the topic? Discuss why an author would include inaccurate material in an article.

Discuss the students' findings in class and strategies for dealing with material in an article that differs from what readers already know; for example, ask students to think of ways to verify true statements by seeking other sources, such as reference materials and experts on the topic.

Teacher Tip

When leading a group discussion after each student has read a different text, ask general questions that students can apply to whatever text they have read. Some samples follow: What did you already know about the topic? What is the most interesting piece of information you found in your reading? How does the information in the article fit with what you already knew about this topic? What else would you like to know about this topic? How has this information changed the way you feel about the topic?

#7

Things That Take Effort

Question Quest

Background

When readers focus on a specific purpose for reading, they can filter the text through this purpose to gain a clearer understanding of ideas presented in the text. In most cases, the title of a passage provides the primary purpose, or reason, to continue reading. As they read the title, readers ask, "Do I want (or need) to know more about this topic at the present time?" To create additional filters before beginning to read, they can develop other questions regarding the material such as "How can I use this material in my daily life?" or "In what careers (jobs) would knowing this information be most helpful? Why?"

Activity

Before they read an expository, or nonfictional, passage, ask students to look over the title, section headings, and other text divisions and develop two to four questions they would like to have answered as they read. For example, before reading a book on simple machines, students might generate such questions as the following: What are simple machines? Where can I find examples of simple machines in my daily life? How can I construct a simple machine? What would my life be like without one (or more) of the simple machines?

At the conclusion of the reading period, have students share their questions and the responses they gained from reading.

Variations

Allow students to work in pairs, creating questions for their partner. Or have students write questions on index cards and place them in a fish bowl or other receptacle. Before they begin to read, have each student draw a question, then respond to the question after reading.

#8

Things
That
Take
Effort

My Favorite "Past" Time

Background

The statement "knowledge is power" is illustrated dynamically when one considers how present-day innovations would have changed (for better or worse) the lives of our ancestors. To strengthen students' grasp of a new concept, have them consider its effect on earlier civilizations. For example, students reading about Thomas Edison and his invention of electricity could think about how they would explain electricity to early American settlers.

Activity

After students finish reading a nonfictional text published in the current year (student choice of subject), have them pretend a time machine has suddenly catapulted them back 50 years in time. Ask students to think about how what they read could change the lives of the people they will meet in this time period. Have students respond orally through class or small group discussions; in written format, independently; or dramatically, with students acting as period characters and the time traveler spreading news of what he or she knows about the topic.

#9

Things
That
Take
Effort

My Job as a...

Background

Readers need to see the connection between written material and real life before they are willing to free space in their long-term memory to retain the information in the text. Exercises that help them see this connection give students greater opportunity to understand and retain the written material.

Most students, for example, have some idea of what they want to do as adults but very little idea of what is involved in attaining that goal, such as schooling required or skills they must possess. The following activity relates the text to real-life careers.

Activity

As they read a nonfictional book or article, have students think about which careers would use this information. Brainstorm as a class for a list of these careers.

Create a graph or other visual tool to show who in the text would use the information most and least. For example, nurses and doctors use chemistry and math and farmers and ranchers use math and biology. After the class has charted the careers, discuss how those careers named most likely to use the information relate to one another.

Ask students to write down their own career choice, and explain how the information they've read will help them in that career.

Materials

- Drawing paper

#10

Things That Take Effort

Making "Sense" of a Poem

Background

Poetry is best understood and appreciated when it is shared aloud. As a means of sensory stimulation, when readers can see and hear them simultaneously, the words have greater impact and ability to invite a mental image of the ideas presented in the poem. Poetry also provides a valuable opportunity to show students how to collect more information by using all five of their senses.

For this exercise, use published or student-authored poetry. The latter is often enhanced after examining several examples of children's poetry currently in print.

Activity

Poetry is a sensory experience. Read a poem aloud in class. After the reading, discuss as a class (or have students discuss in small groups) how the poem touched each of the five senses. Be sure students identify the words or phrases that stimulated each sense: sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.

Students often complain that they don't understand modern poetry. Did isolating the words that appeal to the senses help students better comprehend the poem?

#11

Things That Take Effort

What Do They Want?

Background

Just as readers have a purpose for reading, story characters have a reason behind their actions. Understanding their motivation means examining where they are at the story's opening and where they want to be by the story's conclusion. Letting readers in on this information is the author's way of hooking their attention as they make the journey along with the main character.

Activity

As students read a short story or book, ask them to mark the place where they think they know what the main character hopes to attain or accomplish. As a class, discuss how long it took for students to identify the character's goal. What stands in the character's way of attaining this goal? How does the main character plan to use his or her talents and abilities to overcome these obstacles?

Variation

Have students discuss the answers to these questions in small groups and present the answers to the class.

Enrichment

Have students compare two to three books they've read recently and answer the following questions: How long does the author wait in each book to reveal what the main character wants? Do you prefer to know this information right away or to wait a little while longer? Why?

#12

Things That Take Effort

Just the Facts

Background

While writers have a right to their opinion, they also have a responsibility to their audience to identify it as such. In some cases, writers, particularly advertisers and politicians, represent their opinions as fact, thus leading less experienced readers to false conclusions.

Activity

Have students read an editorial. Have them work in pairs to highlight the factual information. Remind them that facts are identified by such key words as *is* and *are* in the statement.

Have students respond to these questions: Does the author include many facts or just a few? Why do you think the author included so many (or so few) facts in his or her article? Discuss the students' opinions as a class.

Variation

Have students role-play a conversation between the author and a reader where the reader questions the author's use of facts. The "author" should explain how he or she decided how many facts to include and defend his or her use of facts. Are the reader and the class satisfied with the "author's" response? Why or why not?

Materials

- Newspaper editorial

#13

Things
That
Take
Effort

What Do You Think?

Background

Readers must understand the distinction between fact and opinion. If they fail to grasp this concept, they are doomed to succumb to countless advertising and political strategists who present information as if it were completely factual, rather than a mix of fact and opinion.

Use advertisements and editorial pages to complete this exercise. Before students begin to read, discuss opinion markers—terms such as *feel, believe, suspect, imagine, suppose* that do not represent factual statements.

Activity

Have students read an editorial or advertisement, identify the opinion markers, and determine the author's feelings on the topic. Based on what students already know about the topic, ask them if they think the author's opinion is based on fact or something else. Why do they say that?

Enrichment

Have students discuss in what ways, if any, this editorial or ad has affected the way they feel about the topic. Why?

Materials

- Advertisement or editorial

#14

Things That Take Effort

Chapter Chatter

Background

Too often, the readers' first introduction to a book is the opening sentence of the first chapter as they begin an in-class or homework reading assignment. From that point, readers must begin to construct meaning. However, countless pieces of information, if reviewed before reading begins, provide readers with a wealth of knowledge about the text's content. These clues include chapter titles, section headings, photos and illustrations, charts, graphs, and sidebars. Previewing activities in which students look for these clues can be conducted with individual students, in small groups, or with an entire class, with students producing oral or written responses.

Activity

Before beginning a new chapter or unit of study, have students participate in a preview session to prepare them for the new information. Create a worksheet with questions such as those below, or conduct the exercise orally. Modify the questions to suit a particular text.

- Read the chapter title and look at any pictures on that page. What do you think this chapter is about?
- List two things you already know about this topic.
- List three questions you'd like to have answered by reading this chapter.
- Compare two illustrations that appear in this chapter. How are they alike? How are they different?
- Jot down three or four highlighted words and what you think they mean. While you read, check your definition against the one supplied in the chapter or in a dictionary. (If no words are highlighted, have students pick words they do not know and look them up in the dictionary, adding the definition to the one they wrote.)

#15

Things That Take Effort

What Do You Know?

Background

Assessing prior knowledge before beginning a unit of study benefits everyone involved in the process. Teachers can plan instruction to best meet the needs of students. Individual students can organize what they know about a topic, harnessing that knowledge as an essential tool in deciphering the new, less familiar information. Brainstorming as a group offers some insights while written questionnaires provide a more detailed road map for the journey.

Activity

A day or two before beginning a new unit of study, announce the topic to the class, and conduct a fact-finding mission to determine what students already know about the subject. In addition to providing some idea what level instruction must be undertaken, the discussion may yield some experts in the field who can peer tutor their classmates, if necessary. These sample statements help assess student prior knowledge.

> I know (nothing, a little, some, a lot) about (*insert topic here*).
>
> One thing I would like to know about (*topic*) is _______________.
>
> Knowing about (*topic*) would help me if I decided to become a _____________.
>
> Here are three words I think are related to (*topic*): ________, ________, ________.
>
> I think it will be (fun, boring, hard) to learn about (*topic*).

#16

**For
the
Committed**

Charting the Way

Background

Not all prereading work needs to be done by students individually. Nor should every exercise be graded and included in the students' final evaluation. In some cases, exercises are simply an informal method of assessing general student knowledge before beginning a new unit of study.

Sometimes, as in the case of brainstorming, it's a good idea to involve the entire class. In addition to stimulating interest in the upcoming topic, classmates' responses prompt another's memory. The result is a more comprehensive preparation activity that generates more excitement about the topic.

Activity

Use the KWL teaching model (Ogle 1986) to help generate class discussion and learn what students know about a new topic. Divide the board into three sections, writing the topic across the top. In the first section, ask students to list the information they already know (K) about the topic. Use the statements from the K column to develop a list of questions for the second section, W, composed of information students want to know about the topic.

Divide the class into pairs, assigning each team one question in the W column. After reading the text, each team is responsible for presenting its answers to the rest of the class in whatever fashion the team members choose. With Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences in mind (1993)—verbal, visual, logical, musical, bodily, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic—encourage them to think creatively about their presentation. They might dramatize information, place it in a poem or song, or draw it.

After each presentation, ask a student not in the presentation group to use the information provided to formulate a response for the relevant question in the W column, thus forming the third section, L, containing information students learned by listening to the others' presentations. For example, if the topic is fly-fishing, and a question in the W column is "What equipment do I need to go fly-fishing?," the group might answer "a fly rod, line, reel, leader, and flies." Students must listen to the presentations carefully so they can fill in the L column as completely as possible.

#17

**For
the
Committed**

Web Wonders

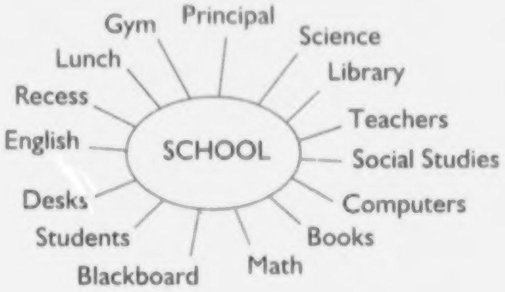
Background

Many teachers already use the webbing method as a prewriting exercise to help young writers come up with ideas before a composing session. Students write down a topic, then write down as many words and ideas as possible that relate to that topic. This same technique is valuable to provoke readers' thought processes before a reading session.

Activity

Begin a group reading session by writing the topic on the board, then asking students to share, aloud, what they already know about the subject. Copy their responses (words and short phrases) around the topic until one side of the board is filled. Encourage students to share whatever they can remember: their contributions may trigger someone else's memory.

Ask students to examine the words and phrases on the board to determine if they can be placed into categories based on their relationship to one another. For example, if the topic in the center of the web is *School*, the responses from students related to this topic could fit under such categories as People Found in a School, Supplies Found in a School, Activities Conducted in a School, Places Found in a School, and Feelings about School. Ask a volunteer to name a category into which some of the words might fit. Write the category on the board, then list words and phrases from the web to fill the category. Add any new words students offer for that category in a different color of chalk/marker. Repeat this step until all (or most) of the words from the web have been assigned to a specific category.



Remind students as they begin reading to watch the passage for some of the words or phrases from their lists. After reading, challenge students to provide at least one more word for each of the categories on the board. Write these words in a third color. Discuss how the new information found in the text relates to what students already knew about the topic.

For an added challenge, ask students to make up one more category and list three to five new words under it.

Materials

- Three colors of chalk or erasable markers

#18

For the Committed

Mapping Magic

Background

Previewing and predicting exercises serve an essential function in preparing students to read. As thought organizers, they help students catalogue what they know about the topic as well as what they have come to expect about how written information is organized. Effective readers look at a text in terms of concepts and ideas as opposed to letters and words. They use higher level thought processes (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and so on) as they read, rather than simply sounding out words. This activity is a way to implement the three-story intellect model (Fogarty 1997), in which students gather information, classify that information, and apply it.

Activity

Preview the text, beginning with the title: ask students to predict what sort of story or information the title suggests will follow. Ask them to explain their responses.

After they have read the passage silently, let students brainstorm in groups or as a class any details, facts, and so on they recall from the text. Copy those responses on the board. Ask students to scan the list for similar ideas that can be grouped together (how the main character looked or acted, physical properties of the solar system) and have them title these groups.

Create a semantic map, with the topic or story title in the center, or hub, and the group titles extending from spokes around it. Ask students to review the lists silently to determine if the information there triggers their memory for any additional facts or details.

Discuss, as a class, how the lists relate to one another and to the topic or story title. This kind of postreading discussion helps reinforce and clarify students' understanding of what they've read, allowing them to see where the new information fits into their existing body of knowledge on a particular topic.

#19

For the Committed

Directed Reading Thinking Activity

Background

Many inexperienced readers hesitate to become actively involved in class discussions, fearing they might supply an incorrect answer to the teacher's questions and face the ridicule of their classmates. One of the best methods for encouraging even the most reluctant speakers is to accept all answers from all students. When teachers write all the responses on the board, with no answer associated with a particular student, uncertain readers are more willing to offer their opinions. Such activities, as outlined by Stauffer (1969), provide a nonthreatening means of practicing predicting skills, which are so essential in the maturation of a reader.

Activity

Assign students to read the first few pages of a fictional story, then stop and as a class try to predict what will happen next. Ask open-ended questions, such as "What do you think will happen next?" and "Why do you say that?" Write all student responses on the board.

Have the class continue reading silently for a few more pages, then stop and review all the predictions made earlier. Discuss the responses, eliminating those that failed to occur while highlighting any predictions that remain valid. Use the information from the second reading to make new predictions, recording them in a new color of chalk on the board.

Repeat the process a few more times (depending on story length), confirming and refuting predictions until the final outcome is evident to students. Discuss the number of predictions that remained valid from the beginning of the activity. At what point did the conclusion become apparent to most readers in the class? What information acted as clues in that section of the story? Discuss with students how predicting helps readers better understand what is happening as they read.

Materials

- Several colors of chalk or erasable marker

#20

For the Committed

The Amazing Book Preview

Background

Actual reading is only one of the methods available to determine the type of material the text includes. And this process can be very intimidating as the reader attempts to soak up all the information in a spongelike manner. Ultimately, large blocks of information, much of which is essential to understanding the text, are lost in what might best be termed as "oversaturation," which leads to "system failure" and, ultimately, an almost total lack of comprehension.

Previewing texts before they begin to read not only allows readers to work with manageable chunks of information, it also accommodates those alternate style learners who understand more clearly when they can examine a work in its component parts.

Students can complete the following previewing activity individually, in small groups, or as a whole class. The responses can be recorded by each student or by the teacher on a board for all students to read and, in some cases, copy (optional).

Activity

Begin with the title and topic of the text. Ask students to compare the two pieces of information. What words in the title help identify it as a science, social studies, or other type of text? What expectations might a reader have after reading the title?

Next, have students list three chapter titles and discuss how they relate to the book's title and topic. Do they offer a clearer picture of the subject?

Read the introduction aloud or silently, as appropriate for the group. Have students tell, in their own words, what they think the author intends to talk about in this book and explain what clues they used to reach that decision.

Examine any chart, graph, or map in the book. Randomly select students to tell at least two facts they learned from each special text feature. Largely ignored by many readers, these features contain a wealth of information about the topic.

Have students glance through the index and list three to five words they recognize. Ask them to write their own definitions of the words as well as their opinion of how these terms might fit in with the topic of the book.

Keep track of the exercise responses and refer to them as students begin reading the text. Ask them what they learned during the preview that helped prepare them for this material. Ask students to discuss some other opportunities people have to preview something before the actual experience takes place. How do these situations prepare us?

#21

For the Committed

Preview Puzzle

Background

In addition to preparing readers for maximum comprehension of the text, previewing serves another essential function in the classroom. Many of the activities can be done with small groups, providing an effective way to promote cooperative learning skills and tolerance of peers' ideas. By working in groups, students also learn to be more independent, rather than waiting passively for teacher guidance through a particular activity. This develops a more learner-centered environment in which students have some measure of control over their learning, which stimulates them to participate more actively.

Activity

To introduce the topic of a chapter in a nonfictional text and determine the background knowledge the group possesses, conduct a brainstorming session, with each student supplying one idea or concept relating to the topic.

Divide the class into pairs or triads, assigning each team one aspect of the text that they are to examine closely then report their findings to the rest of the class. Some ideas for team searches follow. The team searching headings, for example, might list the headings along with statements about how the headings might relate to one another. The graph and chart team could present the information orally, highlighting one or two of the facts (primarily comparisons) they find most interesting. Allow three to seven minutes for this step.

Working as a whole class, discuss the information each team acquired. How do the presentations relate to one another? How do they relate to the topic?

Possible Categories for Team Searches

Maps
Boldface type
Headings
Illustrations

Graphs and charts
Topic sentences
Key vocabulary terms
Sidebars (information found in boxes outside of the text)

#22

For the Committed

Closing In on Prior Knowledge

Background

The more teachers know about what previous experiences students bring to the classroom, the better they can serve students' needs by presenting information as it relates to an existing body of knowledge. While many activities involving prior knowledge are conducted with the whole class to set the tone and direction for depth of study for a particular topic, it is important, on occasion, to determine what each individual student currently understands about a subject. Such information is critical in providing suitable reading material and other media for use during a unit of study.

Through the following cloze activity (Taylor 1953), teachers can determine students' prior knowledge of the subject area then use this information to focus discussion on those areas where most or all students seem to have no or little prior knowledge, set up peer tutoring, and design more complex independent projects for students with extensive prior knowledge to keep them interested and involved.

Activity

To determine individual students' prior knowledge of a particular topic, use a cloze activity: reproduce a relevant passage from their nonfictional text, deleting every seventh or ninth word. Avoid deleting key vocabulary terms that are unfamiliar to most students. Distribute copies of the altered passage to the class, instructing them to fill in whatever word(s) they think will make sense in each blank space.

Collect and review the completed papers, noting any areas with a high rate of incorrect responses. Use the information to place students in groups for class activities and for lesson planning, focusing on those areas where student knowledge is weakest. Develop enrichment activities built on areas where student experience and interest is greatest.

Variation

Try a maze variation (below) of the cloze procedure, replacing the blank with one correct and two incorrect responses from which students must select an answer.

Circle the answer that makes the most sense to you.

sun
Planets circle around the moon in our solar system. This movement creates
stars

month
our calendar day. Therefore, the planets closer to the center of the system
year

less
will take more time for each revolution as/than planets farther from the
the same

revolution day and night
center. Earth's rotation on its axis gives us seasons.
orbit weather

SECTION 2

Never-ending Stories

> *All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they really happened and after you are finished reading one, you will feel that all that happened to you, and afterwards, it all belongs to you.*
>
> —Ernest Hemingway

All mysteries, fantasies, and folktales share one characteristic—the author is telling a story. Characters are brought to life and provided with a place where they can live, work, play, and dream.

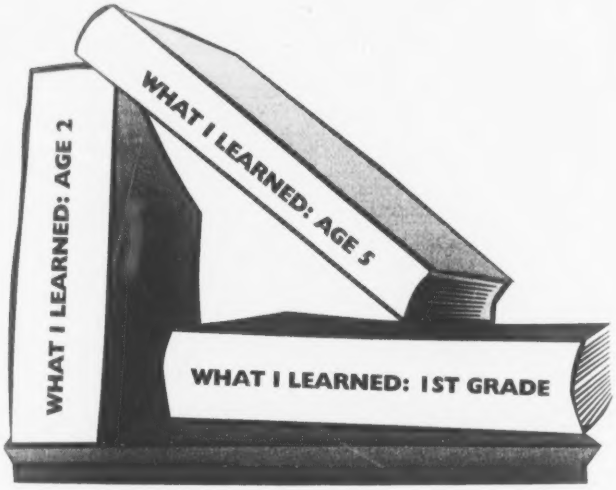
Effective fiction reveals characters through what they think, what they feel, and how they interact with other characters. When inevitable conflicts arise between the characters and opposing forces in their environment, the characters exchange ideas, in the form of dialogue, with one another as they struggle toward a solution to their problems. As readers learn more about these individuals, they are able to make predictions about how the characters might behave in a variety of situations.

Fiction allows readers to delve into their own experiences, bringing what they know about real people and how they deal with conflicts to give the fictional characters greater depth and to construct meaning in the story. Thus, each reader sees a story's characters through a unique, personal, perspective.

Knowledge of the characters also enables maturing readers to gain a greater understanding of other story elements, such as plot, setting, and dialogue, and how these elements relate to one another to form a cohesive tale.

An effective method of introducing readers to the characters, plot, setting, and dialogue of a story is to develop activities that ask students to combine what they know about each element with what they feel might also be true based on their own experience or on what they know of other characters in other books. When they examine new stories using what they have learned about plot and character development from previous stories, readers can begin to predict what the characters will do or how the plot will unfold in the new story. Predicting requires them to combine what they know of language, story elements, and the world around them to make these educated guesses about the outcome of the story.

As students begin to discuss literature, it's a good time to instill the practice of writing and speaking about literature in the present tense at all times.



#23

Simple Things to Do

Picture This

Background

The best picture books use the text and illustrations as storytelling partners. Young children hearing bedtime stories from their parents are so eager for a visualization of the characters and events that, when the parent relates a tale from memory, the child interrupts constantly for more detailed descriptions of what the princess looked like or how tall the castle stood. For beginning readers, illustrations offer key insights into understanding what the written text contains. In the case of more mature readers, the pictures enhance the sensory experience.

Activity

Have students select their favorite picture book. Ask them to look carefully at the illustrations in the story. Then on paper or in a class discussion, have them list at least eight details the pictures provide that aren't found in the text.

Enrichment

Cover the words in any picture book, and have students try to tell as much of the story as they can using only the illustrations. Have students respond to questions such as the following: How does the illustrator let you know how the main character feels about what is happening? Briefly describe the setting and tell how important it is to the events of the story. For example, dark, rainy nights are usually more crucial to the plot than bright, sunny afternoons. List three details not directly related to appearance that you learned about the main character simply by looking at the pictures. What clues led you to your opinion?

#24

Simple Things to Do

That's Your Cue

Background

Readers can learn a lot about characters from the words used to describe how they speak, such as *he shouted* or *she explained slowly*. These phrases give us hints about that person's personality: happy, impatient, rude, and so on. Since books are not ordinarily an auditory medium (except in the case of audio books), these emotive phrases suggest to the reader the tone, speed, and inflection the speaker used. Readers compare this information with what they know about real-life speech patterns and make decisions about what emotions the characters are experiencing throughout the story.

Activity

Have students select a character other than the main character and jot down five phrases that describe how he or she speaks. Ask them to use those words to form three conclusions about that person's personality. For example, one might describe a character whose conversation includes such adverbs as *calmly, slowly,* or *gently* as a patient person.

Ask students to reflect on their conclusions and try to think of someone they know who is like that character. How would they feel about having that character as a friend? Why? Have students share their ideas with classmates in a group discussion of the book.

#25

Things
That
Take
Effort

Keeping Up Appearances

Background

Skilled authors offer just enough information about their characters' physical appearance to stimulate the readers' interest but not enough to squelch their imagination. Viewing herself in the mirror, a character may proclaim her nose "not quite right," which allows readers to eliminate their own perception of the perfect nose but leaves the door open to envision a very acceptable nose viewed only by the character as inadequate.

Appearance is also important in helping the reader determine if certain plot devices are plausible. A mature-looking fifteen year old might be able to masquerade as a college student to investigate strange occurrences on a small town campus while the baby-faced eighteen year old could pass for much younger when it suits the author's purpose.

Activity

Instruct students to create a visual image of one of the characters as they read a story, and have them respond to questions such as the following: What do you think the character considers his or her best physical feature and why? Some examples are height, figure, smile, eyes. Which feature do you feel causes the character the most distress? Why? In your opinion, is the character overreacting to this "negative" feature—exaggerating its importance in his or her life?

Have students write a letter to the character, offering empathy or advice about the character's perception of his or her appearance. As a class, share the letters to stimulate a group discussion about the role appearance plays in our lives.

#26

Things That Take Effort

Staying in Style

Background

The description of a character's appearance is the reader's initial connection with a character, the hook that gets the reader interested as he or she seeks something in common with the character. The quest for a universally appealing character is every author's goal, but imagine the difficulty of this task: trend setters and ugly ducklings appeal to different types of readers.

Clothing, for example, plays a major role in character description. The right combination of shirts, sweaters, slacks, and shoes can spell instant connection between character and reader; the wrong combination could lead the reader to reject the character. So the author may use vague hints, describing merely "jeans," giving readers a chance to plug in information about the current style (wide leg, boot cut, etc.) to imagine a character whose fashion sense they can understand and appreciate.

Activity

Have students select a character and, as they read the story, name two details they learned about that character's physical appearance: How was the information presented? Have students describe how the character's appearance compares with their own looks. How is their appearance the same and how is it different?

Ask students to imagine the character is someone they know at school. Based on what they know about the character's appearance and taste in fashion, have them name two articles of clothing the character would be happy to spend a month's allowance to purchase. Have them defend why they choose those two items. Next have them imagine what the character would not be caught dead wearing and explain why. Have them sketch an outfit they think this character would enjoy receiving as a gift. Share the sketches as a class, with students discussing their choices.

#27

Things That Take Effort

Actions Speak Louder...

Background

As in real life, what a character does sends a stronger, if often contradictory, message than what he or she says. Comparing characters' actions and words is a good way to identify them as positive or negative individuals. Tell students to pay attention to how often characters' words and actions are in conflict. How much of their conversation is centered around their needs as opposed to others' concerns? Do the characters feel free to do as they please or trapped into performing actions not of their own choosing? Discuss with students how knowing the answers to these types of questions creates a clear picture of a character's true nature.

Activity

Have students follow one of the characters through a story, taking note of some of his or her favorite activities as well as those tasks the character hates. Have students examine their list alone or in small groups before answering questions such as those that follow. What type of action would the character most likely take if someone were in need of help? What sort of person would make a good friend for the character? Why do you say that? Would you want the character for a friend? Why or why not?

Given what you know about the character through his or her actions, for what careers do you feel he or she would be best suited? Why? At what jobs would the character fail miserably? Why?

Instruct students to write down a situation on an index card—coming to a new school, seeing an animal in distress, or witnessing a robbery are just a few examples. Toss the cards into a fish bowl. Place students in groups of three to five students, and allow each group to select three or four cards to read and discuss what they feel the character would do in each case. Groups should be able to support their answers with examples of the character's behavior in the story. Share some of the scenarios as a class, asking other groups whether they agree with the presenting group's assessment of the character.

Materials

- Index cards
- Fish bowl or other receptacle

#28

Things That Take Effort

What Did You Say?

Background

Everyone has something to say, and story characters are no different. They voice their opinions, lodge complaints, or express their gratitude. Many characters have important topics to discuss while others seem only enchanted by the sound of their voice. What characters say, how and when they say it, and the person(s) involved with them in dialogue—a conversation between two or more characters—are all key factors in understanding their motivation.

Discuss dialogue and its role in advancing the narrative: it is often a more succinct way of giving information; it adds variety to the text by breaking up long stretches of prose; it provides additional information about the characters such as their education, demeanor, and attitude among other qualities.

Activity

Tell students to focus on one or two characters as they read a story, then answer the following questions: How do they speak to one another? To other people? What is their most frequent tone of voice? What sort of verbal manner (interrupting others, monopolizing conversations, offering praise and encouragement, etc.) do they possess?

Divide the class into pairs to prepare short skits featuring the story characters in an invented dialogue based on what students learned about the characters' habits from the story. Have students develop a scene (or choose from a list developed during a group discussion) to act out in front of the rest of the class. The purpose of the activity is for students to take what they've learned about the characters and extrapolate how the characters might behave in a variety of new situations such as attending a new school, losing a friend, or winning the lottery. A pre-skit discussion helps students identify character traits and reach some common ground (total agreement is not necessary) about how characters might react.

#29

**Things
That
Take
Effort**

If You Could Read My Mind…

Background

Discuss the difference between dialogue and monologue—when characters talk to themselves either aloud or silently (inner monologue)—and monologue's role in telling readers what the character thinks. To authors and readers alike, a monologue is a key element in developing and understanding characters. What characters think often conflicts with what they say and do; therefore, a monologue offers a secret passage into the character's mind, where true feelings and motivations reside. The information obtained through characters' thoughts helps readers comprehend why they may act or speak in a certain way. Through monologue, readers make the most intimate connection with the characters.

Activity

Have students look for a scene in which what the character says and feels conflict. Can students think of a time when what they said or did and what they felt were in conflict? What were the circumstances? If they were in the same circumstance again, would they behave the same way? Discuss as a class.

The character has thoughts and feelings that may be known only to the reader. Have students create a pleasant daydream for that character that includes what the character secretly wants or needs but does not currently possess. Have students describe their own favorite daydream and explain how it compares with the character's daydream.

Variation

Students will find it easier to gather information on the main character; however, for an added challenge, offer them the choice of using a lesser character who is still pivotal to the plot but whom they might find more interesting. Then place students in small groups with each group taking a different character and responding to the same questions.

Teacher Tip

If a student demonstrates a lack of understanding of the character through this activity, highlight a response of the character's, and ask the student to judge this response against the response the student is suggesting to see why the student's is different. The student's answers, either written or oral, can provide great insight to the thought processes that led him or her to view the character in such a light.

#30

Things That Take Effort

Happily Ever After?

Background

At some point during a story, characters begin to see the situation through a new, different perspective. They see their own needs in relation to a grander plan and decide how much they want or need to achieve their goal. This process reflects the growth of characters, and it must occur before characters seem real to readers. During this metamorphosis, readers find a common bond with the characters as they compare their own actions and thoughts to what is going on in the characters' lives. A well-written book gives readers the opportunity to learn not only about the characters in the story but about themselves as well.

Activity

After the class has read a story, review what they know about the characters with these questions in mind: How do each of the characters change? How do they remain the same? What emotions do they feel at the end of the story, and how are these feelings different (or the same) from what they feel at the beginning of the story?

Ask students to think of a time when an event (or series of events) changed their life. Have them write a journal entry describing the event and answering the following questions: What emotions did you feel as the event unfolded? What did you feel when it was over? How has the event changed you?

#31

**For
the
Committed**

Story Workshop

Background

Each element of fiction works in conjunction with the others to form an interesting, plausible story. The most exciting plot fails if the characterization is flat. Likewise, the story becomes muddled if the characters are shifted frequently from one setting to another without advancing the plot as they move. Dialogue is a reader's liveliest interaction with the character, so if it is stilted or infrequent, readers drift away. By examining the component parts of a work of fiction, readers come to appreciate the complex interaction taking place among literary elements.

Activity

To help students get a clearer sense of each story element and its role in the whole reading experience, create questions such as those that follow, answers to which students will not find directly in the text. Readers must use what they know about the characters, plot, setting, and dialogue to extrapolate the answers. Have students pretend they are the story's main character to answer the questions individually or in small groups. The activity is also effective as part of a prewriting session to help student authors create characters, settings, and so on for their own compositions.

Character: What is your most important possession? Why? What is your least favorite activity? Why? How do you avoid doing it? How did you and your best friend meet one another? When do you feel happiest? saddest? What makes you angry? What is your greatest fear? What do you like best about being alone? least?

Plot: What is it that you really want or need most? Why? Who (or what) is preventing you from getting what you want? How can you overcome these obstacles? Whom can you rely on to help you? Why do you trust that person(s)? What will happen if you don't get what you want?

Setting (Close your eyes and think about where you were when the story began): When was the last time you were here? How do you feel about being here? What (if any) memories do you have of this place? Take a deep breath. What do you smell? Run your hand across the nearest object. How does if feel? Can you recognize it? What kind of sounds do you hear around you? Are they the same as or different from the last time you were here?

Dialogue: What is your favorite word or phrase to say? How do the people around you speak differently from you? How can someone tell you're angry with him or her? How do you tell someone he or she has hurt your feelings? Describe your laugh. What makes you laugh?

SECTION 3

Nonfiction: A Matter of Fact

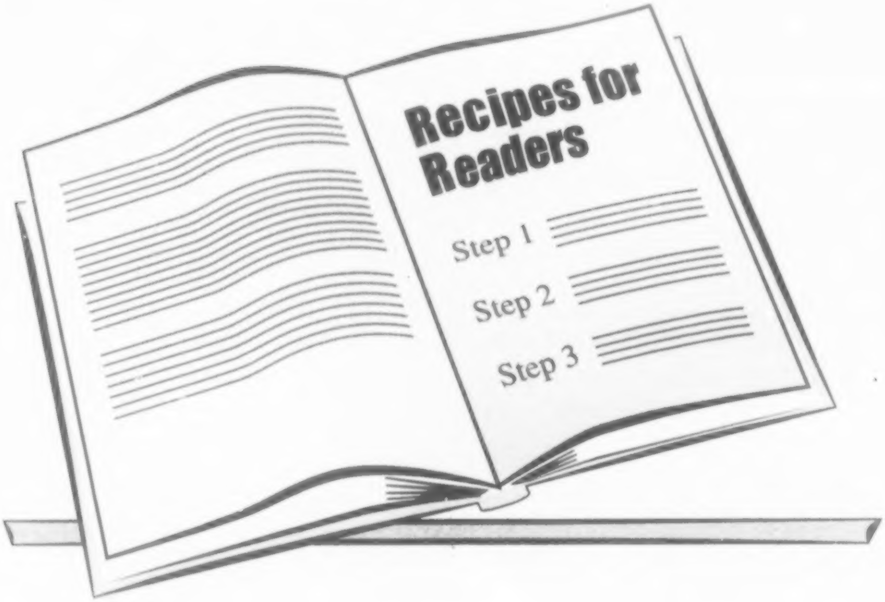
Truth is tough. It will not break, like a bubble, at a touch; you may kick it about all day like a football, and it will be round and full at evening.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

The structure of expository text differs from fictional text in a number of ways. Nonfiction is organized in paragraphs rather than the highly readable dialogue found in most stories. A more specialized vocabulary in nonfiction often requires the inclusion of a glossary to explain these unfamiliar terms, and illustrations, charts, and graphs provide additional information.

Many students fail to comprehend expository text because they try to employ the same strategies they use to read fiction. Often both the information and the format in which it is presented is unfamiliar and, therefore, not readily understood by immature readers.

To understand expository text, readers must first understand the five most common techniques of exposition: description, sequence, comparison, cause and effect, and problem and solution. Recognizing these basic structures allows readers to predict what information will follow. Since students learn best when they see a connection in the material with their own lives, the most effective way to introduce these basic text structures is to demonstrate the presence of these structures in their daily lives and how they are used to organize information in print.


Recipes for Readers
Step 1
Step 2
Step 3

#32

Simple Things to Do

Taste Tempters

(Description)

Background

Most learners rely only on the senses of sight and sound to identify and categorize new information. Yet the three remaining senses—taste, touch, smell—hold a wealth of additional information to expand and enhance the learner's perception of an object or concept.

Texts written in the description mode use all five senses to bring the topic to life for readers. These texts often supply the backbone of a reader's knowledge on a given topic, for through description, most concepts are introduced to young readers. Recognizing a book organized in this format prepares learners to receive information with all five senses.

Activity

One of the most effective means of understanding the structure of a text is to replicate it. Descriptive texts contain information gathered from using all five senses;

therefore, writing a descriptive passage requires sharpening of all the senses.

Have students write a description of their favorite food. The description must use all five senses but must not name the food. Then have them read the descriptions aloud to see if their classmates can guess the favorite food.

#33

Simple
Things
to
Do

Dressed for Success

(Sequence)

Background

Recipes contain a prescribed sequence, or order, of instructions. So do building projects from constructing a birdhouse to building a skyscraper. Even jokes and stories are told in sequence, using such words as *first*, *next*, and *finally*.

Like a sequenced activity, the order of a sequence text is essential to understanding the material and producing the desired outcome. Reversal or omission of steps means failure for both reader and writer and, depending on the subject matter, can result in minor errors or prove disastrous. The success or failure of a sequence text is the easiest of the five basic structures to gauge objectively. If a reader follows the sequence exactly but does not achieve the desired outcome, the fault lies with the writer.

Activity

Every day, people perform tasks that require them to use a specific sequence. Have students list, in writing, how they dress for school in the morning, numbering each step. Then have them switch two of the steps and predict the outcome. Then ask them to omit a step and think about how they'd look when they arrived at school. Share their findings as a class.

#34

Simple Things to Do

Here and There

(Comparison)

Background

Comparing is one of the first higher level thinking processes children acquire. From the first time they recognize that not every female face is "Mommy" or four-legged beast is "doggie," they make decisions based on comparison. Comparing old with new, simple with complex, or familiar with unfamiliar is the basis of developing and expanding our mental "card file." Texts organized in a comparison structure encourage readers to look at each idea or topic in its component parts, sifting through the data for similarities and differences among the concepts presented.

This activity gives students practice in the process of accommodation, comparing two or more objects or ideas by focusing on their differences. Accommodation requires a more mature level of thought process than comparison that focuses on similarities (assimilation) because students must first establish criteria for comparison then identify the discrepancies. For example, when comparing two schoolrooms, students may find the two rooms have the same number of windows (similarity), but the windows in one room are smaller (difference).

Activity

Have students list five ways the classroom is different from their bedroom. Then ask them to list ways the rooms are alike. Remind them to think in terms of the rooms' function, size, furnishings, regular occupants, visitors, and decorations. When they have finished, discuss as a class the following questions: Which list was easier to make? Why do they think this is so?

Repeat the activity, using two rooms in the same building such as separate classrooms at school, two rooms in the students' home, and so on. Then discuss these questions: Was composing these lists easier or more difficult compared with the first lists they made? What do they think is the reason for the difference? Have students compare and discuss the lists in small groups.

Teacher Tip

To help students who may have trouble generating a list of differences, tell them to identify an item or condition that exists in both rooms (number of windows, furnishings, color, etc.), then look at this item first in one room then the other. Another method is to list a number of objects in one room, then observe the other room for the presence or absence of these objects.

#35

Simple
Things
to
Do

Why Do You Think This Is So?

(Cause & Effect)

Background

"For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction," Newton's third law of motion says, and the truth of the statement is evident in our daily lives. Pulling down on the cord of window blinds makes the blinds go up. Hitting an oncoming tennis ball with a tennis racquet causes the ball to travel in the opposite direction.

Texts organized in cause and effect structure either identify the effect, then examine the causes that led to it, or explore the elements required to bring about a certain outcome or event. In both cases, a good writer clearly defines the connection between the cause and the effect.

Activity

Have students reflect on cause and effect in their own lives. Ask them to think of something that has happened to them recently, then list, in writing, three to four reasons (causes) the event occurred.

Next, ask them to examine their behavior in class, with friends, or on the playing field, and, in writing, explain what effect they think their actions have on them socially or on their performance on and off the field. What outcome do they hope for in these different situations? How can they alter their actions to produce the desired outcome (effect)?

#36

Simple
Things
to
Do

What's the Problem?

(Problem & Solution)

Background

Everyone has problems. Some we can solve on our own, others require help from someone else. Still other problems may be beyond our control entirely.

Texts organized in problem and solution format identify the problem early in the text. The author explains whether the problem is easy or difficult to solve and offers some suggestions for managing the dilemma. Finally, readers learn how to implement the steps necessary to solve the problem.

Activity

Make time for this activity both now and in a few weeks so students can check their problem-solving progress.

Students will agree that almost everybody has at least one thing they'd like to change about themselves, and though it's important to like ourselves, there's nothing wrong with wanting to try to do something better. Have students think about a habit or characteristic they have that they really don't like, such as interrupting someone who is speaking, always being late for dinner, and so on. In their journals, have them state the problem they have identified and offer at least three solutions to reduce or eliminate the problem. Be sure they date their entries.

Check back on the entry in a few weeks or months. Ask students to prepare a new journal entry reporting their success in making the change. If changing the behavior has been a struggle, have them try to think of some other strategies that might help. If they changed the behavior successfully, ask them to describe the process—was it difficult? Did they have to modify any of their original solutions, or did they accomplish the behavior change by using those solutions?

Have them discuss the problems in small groups, with group members receiving and offering suggestions on all the group members' problems and how to solve them.

Materials

- Student journals

#37

Simple Things to Do

Weather or Not

(Charts & Graphs)

Background

Charts and graphs provide readers with an at-a-glance way to grasp and retain sizable amounts of information, particularly numerical data. Organized so readers can compare data easily, these graphic features highlight the relationship among the data clearly and concisely.

To teach students how information is organized in a graph or chart, have them gather data through an informal survey and display the data by using one of these features. Seeing firsthand how information is accumulated for use on a graph or chart helps readers know what to look for when they encounter one in an expository passage.

Activity

Have students record the daily high and low temperatures in your city or town for a week by using a line graph and two colored markers: red for high temperatures, blue for low. At the end of the week, have one student connect the high temperatures with the red marker and another student connect the low temperatures with the blue marker.

Have students examine the graph to answer the following questions. Do the lines ever intersect? On what days? On what day does the greatest temperature difference occur? On what day does the smallest temperature difference occur? How many, if any, different days have identical highs and lows?

Then have students write a two- to three-sentence description of this week's weather using information they obtained from the graph.

Materials

- Large drawing paper
- Red and blue markers

#38

Simple Things to Do

Take a Second Look

(Illustrations)

Background

Many readers, even seasoned veterans of the printed word, often skip over photos in expository text in their desire to hurry to the end of a passage or chapter. In doing so, they pass up the opportunity to view myriad pieces of relevant information a single photo contains. Ironically, nonreaders build a great deal of a passage's meaning based on illustrations, while mature learners often dismiss them as filler, taking space away from the more highly valued printed word. Photos and sketches possess the power to breathe life into a page filled with print, but only if readers pay them the attention they deserve.

Activity

Instruct students to select a picture from a nonfictional text and list seven things they notice when they look at the picture. Encourage them to look beyond just the objects in the picture; for example, instead of writing "a lady in a blue dress," "a brown and white cow," and so on, they might say, "the lady is smiling," or "the cow looks too thin." Such a list requires more student judgment (Why do you think the cow looks too thin?) and might, therefore, produce a more thorough examination of the picture paired with the reader's prior knowledge. Have them describe what they think the passage is about based on the picture.

Read the passage associated with the picture aloud in class, and ask students to re-examine their lists to add something they learned about the picture from reading the text. Discuss whether the picture helped them better understand the text. Were their predictions about the content based on the picture accurate?

#39

Things That Take Effort

Welcome to My World

(Description)

Background

By developing activities that help students train their mind's eye to behave like a video recorder, teachers encourage students to produce multisensory descriptions of their environment. Such mental exercises enhance the often-neglected senses of touch, taste, and smell, calling upon students to rely on all five senses with some measure of equality as they read and write about the world. Beginning in familiar territory such as a bedroom or classroom for their sensory workout, students learn quickly to recognize similar descriptive passages in expository textbooks.

Activity

Have students write a description of what a visitor to their bedroom might encounter. Make sure they use all five senses to create a complete experience for their visitor and are specific about all the sights, sounds, and sensations the visitor will find upon entering the students' world. Share the compositions as a class, and discuss which sensory information was the easiest and hardest to recall and record. Why do they think that is so?

Next, have each student describe the classroom, then compare the compositions to see how each classmate envisions the same room.

#40

Things That Take Effort

Howdy, Partner

(Description)

Background

As students master the ability to recognize descriptive passages in expository texts, they are ready to move to the next level of comprehension, that is, identifying the type of questions to ask of a text to fill in any gaps in their sensory "picture." Moving steadily from familiar to new material, design activities that provide only part of the puzzle, leaving students to develop strategies for attaining the missing elements. This process requires them to examine and categorize the existing information before deciding what sensory input is needed to complete the image.

Activity

Have students spend about five minutes interviewing a classmate, then have each student introduce his or her partner to the rest of the class. Either prepare interview questions for students to use, or tell them that through their questions they must learn something other than such simple facts as their partner's age, number of family members, or favorite subject to share with the class. They might ask about their partner's favorite food and hobbies, what she wants to do when she grows up, and what makes her happiest and saddest. This activity is especially fun at the beginning of the school year when some students are new to the class and nervous about not knowing anyone.

#41

Things That Take Effort

Step by Step

(Sequence)

Background

In a text organized in sequence structure, correct, not random, order is essential for true comprehension. Activities in which students see the importance of the proper order of steps illustrate this concept. After completing such an activity, return to the sequence-organized text, using the students' experience to underscore the importance of a prescribed sequence.

Activity

Have students write down every step of an everyday task such as tying shoelaces, then exchange the instructions with a classmate to see if he or she can complete the task using only the written directions as a guide. As a class, reflect on the experience and answer questions such as those that follow: Why is correct order important? Can another order be substituted? What happens if a step is reversed or omitted? What other activities can students think of that require a specified sequence?

#42

**Things
That
Take
Effort**

The Me I Used to Be

(Comparison)

Background

Making comparisons requires the reader to identify the elements of each concept, then stand them next to each other to see how they are different and how they are the same. This higher level thought process requires manipulation of a concept's component parts. Designing activities that ask students to compare two familiar concepts is a solid step in helping them recognize this same process in expository text.

Activity

Ask students to write down six characteristics they possess. Tell them to place an "0" next to those characteristics that have changed in the past five years (favorite sport, favorite food). Place an "X" by those attributes that have not changed in more than five years (eye color, name). Have students write a poem about how they've changed and how they are still the same.

#43

Things That Take Effort

It's News to Me

(Cause & Effect)

Background

The daily newspaper provides readers with an excellent opportunity to view expository text written in a cause and effect format. The stories that appear there, almost without exception, are focused on some newsworthy event. In many cases, the cause of the event is known and identified. In other instances, causes may be assumed or suspected and are reported in that manner.

Activity

Have students work in groups of three to five students to examine an event of local, state, or national interest in the daily newspaper. The groups can work on the same article or each group can have its own article. List three to six reasons why the event occurred, according to the article. Shift groups, allowing one member to take the news story to the new group, and repeat the process. How did the second group's list compare with the one composed by the original group? How many reasons are the same? Why do students think that is so? If all students read the same article, the discussion should produce a consensus of opinion on the article. If each group reads a different article, students can compare their findings.

Variation

For older readers, after they have listed possible causes of the event, have them weigh the effect each may have had on causing the event. Did one particular factor have a greater effect than the others? Which one? Why do they think this is so?

Materials

- Newspaper article(s)

#44

Things That Take Effort

Graphically Speaking

(Graphs & Charts)

Background

Graphs, charts, and tables appear with some regularity in expository passages organized in comparison structure. Graphs illustrate the similarities and differences between two or more topics by reducing them to a numerical status and aligning them. Organizing material graphically is often the most efficient way to display it. Charts and tables also simplify the process of comparing the material.

Activity

Have students carry out the following task. Count the total number of students in the classroom. Construct a simple bar graph to illustrate how each of them leaves school in the afternoon, such as by bus, by car, walking, and so on. Refine the graph further by using two colored markers to show how many boys and girls are in each category—girl bus riders, boy bus riders, and so on. Help students convert the graph to a pie chart, without using a computer, by dividing the total number of students in the class into the number of walkers, bus riders, car riders, and so on to get the percentage of each. Have students illustrate the bar graphs and pie charts on large sheets of paper or on the board.

Materials

- Large drawing paper
- Colored markers

#45

Things That Take Effort

It's a Match

(Illustrations)

Background

Newspaper headlines are often confusing to the maturing reader. Written in half-sentences and two- to three-word blurbs, they violate some basic syntactic rules. Often the headline's meaning is enhanced by the use of photographs. Examining the photos is an effective way to begin to assign meaning to the headline.

Activity

Clip several headlines and accompanying-story photographs from daily newspapers, number them, and separate them into headline and picture piles. Place students in small groups and have them try to determine which headline goes with each photo.

Discuss as a class what clues led groups to make their choices with questions such as the following. What piece of information in the picture helped students match the picture with the words? Which words did they use to match the picture with the headlines? If two or more headlines seemed to fit with the picture, what clues did they use to determine which headline was the real match? Were the pictures or the words more helpful in determining the matches?

Either orally or on paper, have students tell what they think the accompanying story is about.

Materials

- Newspapers

#46

For the Committed

P B & J, Inc.

(Sequence)

Background

Assembly lines are a prime real-life example of the importance of sequenced organization: switching steps or supplying parts in a random order on an auto assembly line could prove disastrous. Seeing sequence in action allows readers to approach sequence-organized text with an eye toward retaining the information as well as getting the sequence right.

Activity

Place students in teams of five. Have the group appoint one member to be the recorder, writing down each step of the process of assembling a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Remind students to include every step; for example, unscrewing the jar lid is a step.

After they've completed the task, have the teams switch instructions with another team, and see if each team can assemble a successful sandwich with the instructions. Tell students to pretend they have never made a sandwich before and to follow the instructions strictly to the letter: if the instructions they've received don't tell them to open the loaf of bread, for example, they should not presume the instructions and open the bag.

When students have completed the activity, ask them to discuss the experience. Were the instructions easy to follow? Were students surprised at how many steps it takes to explain how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? If any groups were not successful, ask them to identify what was wrong with the instructions that made successful completion of the peanut butter and jelly sandwich impossible.

Materials

- Bread, peanut butter, jelly
- Utensils (plastic knives or tongue depressors for spreading peanut butter and jelly)

#47

For the Committed

A Few of My Favorite Things

(Comparison)

Background

Every idea or concept we encounter is made up of component parts. By comparing these parts, we can evaluate the relationship of the concepts.

Superficially, students can compare themselves with classmates in terms of height, sex, race, or other physical attributes. But none of these accurately reflect the whole person. The following activity, which focuses on the inner person, gives students a truer gauge to identify classmates who are most or least like them.

Activity

Ask students to list their favorites in the following categories: color, sport, movie, song, hobby, animal, holiday. Tell them to move around the room comparing their list with classmates' lists to determine who is most and least like them.

After everyone in the room has compared lists, share the results as a class. Who had the most responses in common? What two (or three) students shared all, or almost all, of the same favorites? What other similarities occurred between these individuals? What effect, if any, do you think these factors had on their choice of favorites? For example, did students find that classmates with no siblings tended to like a certain sport or share a similar hobby?

#48

For the Committed

What If?

(Cause & Effect)

Background

In this simple card game, students compile the information each deck will contain. By creating the deck themselves, students play an active role in directing the course of their instruction, an important element in student-centered learning, and the learning experience is reinforced each time they play the game.

Activity

This simple card game is easy to construct and fun to play. Decks are composed of a set of cards in multiples of five (thirty, thirty-five, forty, etc.). Students can make several decks to use with small groups of three to five students during independent time.

On one card, with blue marker, write any event such as tornado, election, birthday. On four separate cards, with red marker, write four possible causes for that event. Each player is dealt five cards. Players draw and discard one card in turn until one player holds an effect card and its four corresponding cause cards.

Materials

- Index cards
- Blue and red markers

#49

For the Committed

Chart Toppers

(Charts & Graphs)

Background

As students master the ability to organize information on charts and graphs, encourage them to continue to the next level by creating their own criteria for what information a chart or graph should include. This activity also provides an excellent opportunity for students to develop and practice their interviewing skills.

Activity

Have students work in pairs to develop a question to ask other members of the class. Make sure the question has a limited number of responses (favorite sport, number of siblings in your family, etc.) for best results. Have students record the responses they receive on a bar graph and a pie chart to display in the classroom.

#50

For the Committed

The Way I See It

(Illustrations)

Background

As well as supplying a great deal of comprehension-enhancing information when inserted in expository text, illustrations also stimulate readers' interest, raising questions that are, one hopes, answered when they read the printed text. Developing these questions, students create the link between words and pictures in nonfictional text.

Activity

Tell students to select an illustration they find interesting from a nonfictional text then list five questions they'd like to have answered about the picture. Tell them to read the passage and try to answer as many of the questions as they can. If students are unable to answer every question, hold a class discussion about where else students might go for the information they seek.

SECTION 4

Responding to What We Read

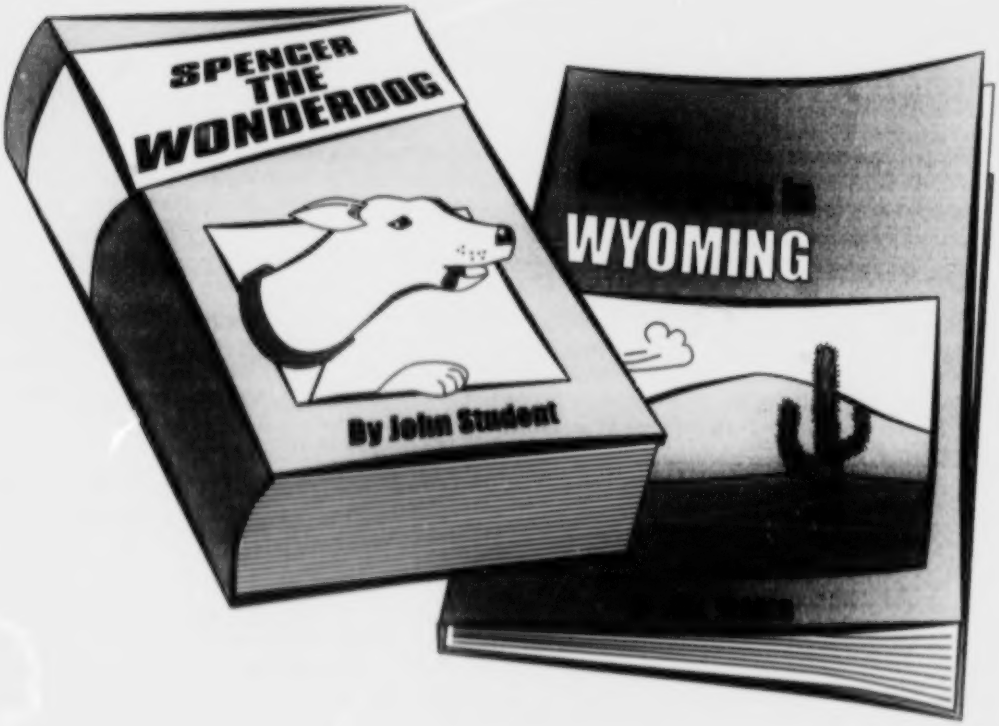
Spoon feeding in the long run teaches nothing but the shape of the spoon.

—E.M. Forster

Listeners learn more from a speech or lecture when they are encouraged to ask questions, make suggestions, and offer their opinions about the presentation. The same holds true for readers. A story or article becomes more meaningful when readers have the opportunity to share their perspective about the text by participating in some form of postreading activity.

Activities that ask students to examine particular aspects of a text, such as characterization, plot, or setting, provide a chance to highlight these elements of story structure and their contribution to the reader's depth of understanding of the text.

These activities can be written or spoken, or in the case of very young readers, even drawn, but their effect is basically the same: examining how a story touches them strengthens a reader's comprehension of it.


SPENCER THE WONDERDOG
By John Student
WYOMING

#51

Simple Things to Do

Help Wanted

Background

As mature readers get to know the characters in a story, they begin comparing them, unconsciously, with individuals in their own lives. Readers might also compare a character with one they encountered in another book. As they organize information about the characters, they are better able to imagine them in situations beyond the printed story. When readers can manipulate characters outside the parameters of the story world, they develop a better understanding of how the characters' virtues and shortcomings affect their choices in their fictional lives.

Activity

Tell students to write a classified ad for the type of job the story's main character could do successfully. Remind them to think about the skills and abilities the character has displayed during the story. It might help them to think about how those attributes remind them of a real person and at what sort of job that individual excels.

Variation

Have students complete this activity with the main characters from a variety of books. Then have students post their ads on a class bulletin board along with the names of all the characters applying for employment, and let classmates guess which characters could respond to each ad. Discuss the traits each character possesses so students can make educated guesses about which character could fill each position.

#52

Simple Things to Do

Remember When . . .

Background

Students' background knowledge leads them to retain and discard certain information they receive while reading a story. Unfortunately, what they may consider the most important details may not be those the teacher highlights for use in future evaluations. It is important, however, to recognize what kind of and how much information students retain from a story to assess their level of comprehension. Immature readers tend to focus on a single, minute detail, assigning it much greater importance than a pivotal scene or character. Having some idea of what each reader considers important provides a clearer picture of his or her ability to read with real understanding.

Activity

Have students list ten characteristics of a story's main character. Answers might range from the way he or she laughs to the number of siblings he or she has to how the character feels about a certain issue such as school, animals, and so on.

After they have completed their lists, place students into groups of three to five students. Ask them to compare lists and answer the following questions: Did each of you remember the same characteristics? Do any of the group's members have identical or very similar lists? Do you have something completely different on your list? If so, why did that fact stand out in your mind?

Discuss the lists with the whole class to see if anyone remembered something that no one else did.

#53

Simple
Things
to
Do

To Whom It May Concern

Background

By the time most students have finished reading or listening to a story, they have some definite opinions about some other way the character's problem might have been resolved. Students are only too willing to take charge of a story, planning and executing a different, and in their opinion, more satisfying, ending. Mining those ideas provides teachers with an excellent opportunity to examine readers' decision-making skills and conflict-resolution thought processes.

Activity

Have students write a letter to the main character, offering some advice regarding his or her situation. It may be the character has not examined every avenue of action open to him or her. Remind students to think about the resources the character has at his or her disposal for solving the problem; for example, if the character is stranded in the wilderness, don't suggest taking the next bus to his or her neighborhood. Share the letters as a class, discussing some of the best options the main character might have taken to solve his or her problem more quickly.

#54

Simple Things to Do

It's an Honor

Background

As readers learn more about the story's main character, they recognize his or her strengths and limitations and make judgments about whether they would want to know that person in real life. Most readers tend to focus on the character's strengths, such as athletic ability, intelligence, or bravery, as they begin to unconsciously project their own dreams and aspirations on that individual: "If I were like (character X), I'd be able to handle the bullies at school."

Finding activities that celebrate a character's positive attributes is a good first step in not only helping readers understand that character but providing a chance for them to focus on what traits they might want to develop as they mature.

Activity

Have students imagine that the story's main character is being honored at an awards banquet, and have them respond to the following questions in writing or in a class discussion. Why is the character being honored? Can you imagine how his or her acceptance speech might begin? Who will be there to cheer the character on?

Have students design a medal or award certificate for the character and explain what it represents. Display the medals or certificates on a class bulletin board.

Enrichment

Stage the awards banquet. Have students use art supplies to create the medals and certificates, and let students take turns playing the role of the main character in the story as they come forward to accept this honor. Have them prepare acceptance speeches. Other roles might be the award presenter (a past recipient of the same award) and a press interviewer who gets the reaction of the award winner.

Materials

- Art supplies such as construction paper and colored pencils or markers

#55

Simple Things to Do

From the Beginning...

Background

Readers are asked to predict what will happen next in a story. Many of the same thought processes are required to consider what might have brought the main character to the point where he or she was at the beginning of the story.

Thinking backwards is a great cause and effect activity: the effect is where the reader and character begin the story, while the time before the text begins might offer the reasons, or causes, the character finds himself or herself in this particular situation.

Activity

Have students draw a picture of or write a paragraph about the main character in the hours or minutes before the actual story begins. Be sure they show or describe the emotion, such as happiness or fear, the character is experiencing as well as the activity he or she is engaged in at the start of the story. Have students tell what clues in the text tell them what to draw or write.

Materials

- Drawing paper and utensils

#56

Things That Take Effort

Watch Me Grow

Background

The most effective response activities are those that give students a chance to combine what they know about the world with what they know about the book they have just read. Such activities allow readers to superimpose real life onto the fictional literature, bringing the characters to life in their mind.

Changing story variables is a great way to get students actively involved in examining, in greater depth, the motivations that drive and direct the main character's actions. By switching one or more factors in the story, readers get a chance to become the author, making necessary changes to alter the character's actions, point of view, and so on.

Activity

Have students imagine the story's main character is an adult instead of a child. Have them rewrite a scene from the story, showing how circumstances would be different—better or worse—for the character. When thinking about the differences in how adults and children are treated, students might answer the following questions: What places can an adult go that a child is not welcome? How would an adult view the character's dilemma? Would the character be in the same situation if he or she were several years older?

On an index card, have each student write a new variable such as the main character living in a different part of the country or with someone other than his or her parents. Place the cards in a fish bowl and draw them randomly for group or class discussion.

Enrichment

Have students work in pairs or small groups to dramatize some of their rewritten scenes.

Materials

- Index cards
- Fish bowl or other receptacle

#57

Things That Take Effort

Author's Antics

Background

Readers can respond to what they read in ways other than writing essays or speaking. Poetry and art are exciting avenues that, in some cases, offer a more appropriate means of expression about a story. Poetry, in particular, calls on all the senses to convey ideas and may help students see the story from a fresh perspective.

Activity

Have students compose a poem or song about the main character or story setting. If they choose to write a song, they can use the music of a song they already know, rewriting the lyrics to suit the main character or the story setting.

Enrichment

Set aside time to listen to some of the students' compositions. Working in this less familiar medium brings new excitement to the story.

#58

Things That Take Effort

Happy Birthday to You

Background

The perfect gift tells us someone listens to what we say and knows what we've been wanting.

Activity

Tell students that the story's main character has a birthday coming up, and the class is going shopping for a gift. In what stores will they begin their search? Do they think the character would prefer something they made themselves? Why? Give students time to select a gift. Ask them to be prepared to explain what made them decide on this gift, and why they think the character will like their present. Have students share their gift with the rest of the class.

Enrichment

Allow students to use art supplies to draw or make something to represent the gift they got the main character, and display the items in the classroom while the class reads the story.

#59

**Things
That
Take
Effort**

Career Counselor

Background

Sometimes, what people want to do and what they are suited to do are not in total agreement. They lack the skills or temperament to pursue certain careers. The same can be said of story characters whose talents and personality may also limit their choice of vocations. In looking at the type of career for which the main character is best suited, readers must examine the character's personality as well as any special attributes that might make him or her particularly suited to a specific career.

This analysis process involves looking at how the character behaves in a number of situations—for example, a hot-headed character would make a poor manager of a department store's complaint department—and what interests and hobbies give the character the most satisfaction. In other example, a love of animals might lead a character to a career as a veterinarian or veterinarian's assistant. Learning to refine these analytical skills regarding a story's main character also prepares readers to evaluate their own career choices.

Activity

Have students list three jobs the main character could do based on the talents and abilities the character possesses now and those he or she hopes to develop in the future. Under each job listing, have students explain why they think the character would succeed in this career, citing information they gathered while reading the story.

Enrichment

Use this activity at the onset of a careers unit to illustrate to students the kind of information they should review about themselves as they ponder their future career plans.

#60

Things That Take Effort

Follow the Leader

Background

Story characters do not exist in a vacuum. They travel to a number of locations, encountering people along the way who, in some way, affect the outcome of the story. The character may dread some places in the story and feel secure in others.

Charting the travels of the main character involves a certain amount of sequencing, since what happens at one place may cause the character to choose whether to travel to the next location. In addition, the location of the main character at any given time in the story offers valuable insights into how the character feels at that moment.

Activity

Have students draw a map of the places the main character travels during the story. The map should include the names of the places, such as a school building, hospital, and so on, the main character visits, and identify as many street names as students can find in the story. The map should indicate the starting location of the story as well as where the story ends. After a discussion of map legends (keys), have students design symbols for *happy, sad, scared, proud,* and so on, and use these symbols to mark the places on the map where the main character feels these emotions. Have them label the map and explain, in the key, what each symbol means.

Materials

- Drawing paper and utensils

#61

Things That Take Effort

Bedroom Bedlam

Background

While adults can decorate an entire home to reflect their personal interests and tastes, children are often restricted to expressing themselves in their bedroom decor. Considered by most children as their castle, the room is filled with those special objects that tell others about them and how they've grown into the person they are today. Even if readers don't have a chance to tour a story character's sleeping quarters, they know enough about the character to make some educated guesses about what they might find there.

Activity

Ask students to draw a picture of the main character's bedroom. Remind them that in addition to providing a layout of the furniture, they should include specific items that might be found there. Tell them to consider what they know about the character to decide what colors the character would choose for decorating, what kind of posters or pictures might be on the walls, whether the room would be neat as a pin or look like a strong wind had just blown through, and so on.

Have students share their drawings with classmates, explaining how the character's room compares and contrasts with their own bedrooms.

Materials

- Drawing paper and utensils

#62

Things That Take Effort

What's News?

Background

While fiction recounts events that are not necessarily true, the story's main event still exists as "fact" for the characters (and for readers, who have suspended their disbelief upon entering this world) and lies at the center of the plot. Learning as much as possible about the story's primary conflict enables readers to predict how each of the characters will react and if there is any hope of resolving the crisis.

Activity

News reporters exert a great deal of effort to "get the story." Have students pretend they are journalists in the story and write a news report about what is happening there. Their stories must be no longer than one page and three paragraphs, but remind them they must include the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) in their article. Tell them to remember to write an exciting headline for their story that makes people want to read it. Have students take turns reading their headlines to the class, and let classmates make educated guesses about what part of the story the reporter is covering.

Enrichment

Discuss with students how the constraints of length, so important in journalism, enhanced or hampered their literary efforts. How did they decide which details to include or omit? Why did they choose a particular statement to begin their article? What prompted them to choose the headline they did?

#63

Things That Take Effort

That's What Friends Are For

Background

As teachers search for ways to make instruction and assessment more effective for learners with alternate styles, they must examine activities suited for the auditory learner. The ability of auditory learners to receive, process, and generate information increases greatly when they are permitted to complete these tasks orally. For example, an auditory learner retains more of a story when the teacher reads it aloud than when the student reads it silently. These students also prefer to answer questions orally, and receive oral feedback from the teacher, rather than write their responses.

Many times these students have a solid grasp of the concept presented but little or no idea how to organize their thoughts on paper, and thus they perform poorly on written evaluations. Likewise, students accustomed primarily to the written and visual arenas often stumble over the simplest verbal task and experience great anxiety in the face of oral class presentations.

Keeping a healthy balance of written and verbal activities in the classroom gives students who do not perform as well in the traditional visual mode a chance to shine and promotes a more well-rounded learning style in all students.

Activity

Everyone has an idea what qualities make a good friend, and we gravitate toward people who possess all, or at least some, of these qualities.

Discuss the main character. How does he or she treat others? Is the character honest? Considerate? Friendly? Does the character have a good sense of humor? Have students reflect on their own criteria for a friend and explain by means of a written response, group discussion, or dramatization why they would or would not like to have the main character as a friend.

#64

Things
That
Take
Effort

Making "Sense" of Story Settings

Background

When asked to describe a place they've been, people rely heavily on the visual stimulation they encountered. Buried in their unconscious memory, however, is how that place smelled, sounded, felt, and even tasted. Later, when they encounter the familiar sound or smell again, they say, "This place reminds me of a place I was years ago," sometimes unaware which sensory recollection has awakened their memory of the earlier location. Acknowledging and training all five senses makes people keen observers of the world around them.

Activity

Have students imagine they are standing beside the main character at a particular point in the story. Have them take note of their surroundings and write or share with a partner a description of the event taking place in the story, using all five senses.

#65

Things That Take Effort

Hero Worship

Background

Whom people hold in high esteem says a lot about them. Discuss as a class what sort of qualities students admire in others. Do they value those who possess money and power? Athletic ability? People we call heroes can shape the futures of those who admire them.

Activity

Everyone has someone he or she looks up to and respects, including the story's main character. Based on what they have learned about the character from reading the story, have students tell the class or a small group what real-life person the character might choose for a hero or heroine and why. For example, a character who must overcome physical disabilities to achieve a goal might admire someone in real life who overcame similar obstacles in pursuit of his or her dreams. Do the other students agree with the choice? Why?

#66

Things That Take Effort

I Know Just How You Feel

Background

Readers enjoy a story most when they can identify with what the main character feels throughout the story. When they share the character's fears, hopes, and dreams, readers make a connection to the story on a different, deeper level as they think about how they, placed in the character's situation, might react. Evaluating a character's response requires more complex thought processes than simply memorizing the character's name and physical appearance.

Activity

The main character has a lot to go through during the course of the story. He or she faces many challenges that change the way he or she looks at the world. The character experiences feelings about what is happening along the way, too. Ask students if they can think of a time in their life when they felt like the main character does. Have them discuss the event with a small group of classmates.

Teacher Tip

To prevent students saying, "No," they've never felt like the main character—an answer that can derail a discussion—begin with a class discussion of the more universal feelings and emotions the main character experiences, the ones to which everyone can relate. If a student can identify one of the character's emotions, then provide a corresponding example of this emotion in his or her life, the activity is a success.

#67

Things That Take Effort

Ready, Set, Role-Play

Background

Readers can respond to a story in lots of ways. One of the most interesting and exciting methods is through role-playing. Assuming the roles of story characters, readers act out how they think the characters would act when faced with a variety of situations. The simplest form of role-playing brings a group of students together on stage to recreate a scene from the story. More creative ventures place the story character in a completely new situation, where the actors must use what they know about that character to face the dilemma. Teachers can create role-playing scenarios, but it's often much more fun to let students take an active part in planning the productions. Many times, their ideas and performances exceed a teacher's wildest imagination as they take an active interest in the learning process.

Activity

Have students focus on the main character of a story they've read in class recently. Then have them try one or more of the following scenarios featuring that character. When they finish with these, ask them to write their own role-playing ideas.

- Choose a scene in the story where the character must make a decision or take action. Pretend you're the main character and defend your actions to a parent, teacher, or friend. (Roles: Main character and parent or teacher or friend)
- Imagine you're the main character and a genie has granted you a single wish. What will you wish for and why do you want it? (Roles: Main character and genie)
- Your best friend, the main character, is missing. Give the police an accurate, detailed description of the character, and name at least three places where the officer could begin the search. (Roles: Main character's best friend and police officer)
- Imagine you're a tour guide. Tell your customers all about the wonderful spot (the story's setting) they've chosen for their vacation. (Roles: Tour guide, vacationers)

#68

For the Committed

Once upon a Time…

Background

Begin by discussing with students how their lives would be different if they were born 20, 50, or 100 years ago. Discuss what it would be like to use horses as a main form of transportation or live without telephones, computers, and other modern conveniences. Remind them of social studies lessons about the hardships early settlers faced as they made their way across the country in Conestoga wagons or pulling handcarts and the challenge of living without modern conveniences such as electricity or indoor plumbing.

Activity

Tell students to imagine that the story the class is reading takes place 10, 25, 50, or 100 years ago. In small groups, have them rewrite a scene from the story, showing what would be different for the characters who are accustomed to some of the same conveniences students are. Remind them to think about some of the modern conveniences or devices the characters use in the story that might not be available to them in the past. For their scenes, students must think about how the characters must alter their actions to compensate for the loss of these conveniences. Would the main character in particular have to solve the story's dilemma or achieve his or her goal in another way without these devices? Have them discuss their scene with the whole class.

Enrichment

Have students perform a skit dramatizing the effects on the characters of the loss of modern conveniences. Student groups could develop a full script or script ideas that they use to perform their skits.

#69

**For
the
Committed**

Back to the Future

Background

While we know with some certainty what went on in the years before our time, we can only speculate about what will come in the future. Many authors and filmmakers try to guess what new inventions await us in the next 50 or 100 years. Discuss with students the fact that while we rely on history to tell us about the past, science provides more ideas of what we can expect in the future.

Activity

Have students pick a scene from a fictional text and rewrite it, transporting the characters at least 100 years into the future. Tell them to think about the following questions as they write: How do the characters handle their problems in the future? What sort of inventions might be available to them? What sort of new obstacles, such as space creatures or water or oxygen shortages, might they have to face to achieve their goal? Would the problems they face in the present even exist in the future?

Variation

Instead of placing the entire story in the future in the scene students rewrite, have them portray the main character as a time traveler coming to (or from) the future, possessing only the knowledge he or she has from the time in which the story is set.

#70

For the Committed

Bon Voyage

Background

Readers who prefer fiction do so because it transports them on a journey of their imagination to all sorts of wonderful places, accompanied by the main character. On the other hand, students often feel that expository text contains pages of facts and figures that have little or no relevance to their lives. The most effective class exercises link the factual material to something readers know from their daily lives. In that way, readers can build bridges from what they learn in the expository text to a concept they have already encountered in real life.

Activity

Everyday items, such as travel brochures, are an excellent way to encourage students to study and gather information about a particular region. With students working in groups of three to five, have them design a travel brochure and poster for a country the class has just read about in social studies. Instruct them to make the brochure colorful and exciting, filled with sketches they draw or pictures they cut from a magazine depicting the splendor of the foreign land. Only an inviting poster will convince travelers to leave their homes to venture to this far-off land of paradise. Be sure students highlight the best features of the country to entice people to visit.

Teacher Tip

Computer software programs are available that allow students to enter text and pictures. The program arranges this material in a brochure format and prints the brochure.

Materials

- Art supplies such as construction paper and posterboard

#71

For the Committed

What's Your Game?

Background

Board games have fascinated children for generations. Asked about their favorites, many children say that while they enjoy a particular game, they and their friends or siblings have more fun creating their own rules to go along with the existing board and game pieces. The possibilities are almost limitless, and so is the enjoyment.

Activity

With students in groups of three to five, have them design a board game for the story. Have them select and draw objects to represent each of the central characters and explain their decisions. Have them also respond to questions such as the following as they design their game: What will the bonus and penalty cards for the game say? On what spaces will the players stop as they move around the board? What is the ultimate object of the game? What name will they give the game that will make people want to play?

As students gather information for the game, they must sift through details about story characters and settings. They synthesize this information in a new form—the board game. The decisions students make about what to use to represent the story characters, settings, and so on illustrate their depth of understanding of the various story elements.

Teacher Tip

To get students actively involved in this exercise, find old game boards or pieces of very stiff cardboard. Cover the boards with several coats of white paint, then allow students to design the playing surfaces themselves. Use everyday objects, such as buttons or nuts and bolts, for the game pieces. Keep the finished products around the room for students to play during indoor recess.

Materials

- Old game boards or stiff cardboard, painted white
- Objects for game pieces
- Drawing utensils

SECTION 5

Noteworthy Information

> *Next to the originator of a great sentence is the first quoter of it.*
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Imagine studying for a test using the notes of a student who tried to capture a lecture word for word. Or worse, imagine studying—and trying to fill the gaps in—notes taken by someone who copied only a few vocabulary words and abbreviated them at that!

Many students don't realize it, but taking useful notes is a skill, and like all skills, good note-taking requires practice. But before they're willing to improve their skills, students must first recognize the value of good notes. Of course, good notes make studying for exams easier. But the very act of note-taking, when done properly, increases a student's understanding of the material and, ultimately, can mean the difference between scoring well or poorly on written examinations.

Effective note-taking depends primarily on three factors:

1. Listening Skills: The ability to focus attention and block out most other distractions makes note-taking easier. Good listening requires practice, too, so several activities in this section have as their goal mastery and refinement of this skill.

2. Note Organization: Good notes group concepts according to how they relate to each other and to the topic or text as a whole, in other words, using the same organizational strategies employed by the writer or lecturer.
3. Note Review and Test Preparation: Even the best notes will not serve their purpose if students write them then forget them until hours before an examination. Notes are a useful study tool when students review them regularly, clarifying them whenever necessary.

Having better listening and organizing skills enables students to produce more usable notes that they then review regularly. But there is no single "right" way to take notes. Each student must find a system that suits him or her and is efficient as well as effective. Taking good notes is only one factor in a comprehensive study program meant to enhance overall student performance. The other factors are developing good listening skills and employing consistent study habits.

#72

Simple Things to Do

Listening Inventory

Background

A number of factors affect students' ability to listen with understanding to what they hear, including their environment (clearing the desk, having enough space on a page to write, removing distractions), good listening behaviors (not interrupting, looking at the speaker), and asking relevant questions. Focusing on these areas may speed the development of better listening habits.

Activity

Ask students to write briefly why they think they're good listeners. To conduct the questionnaire, have them number a blank paper from 1 to 9 and respond to each statement as you read it by writing a "2" if they always or almost always agree, "1" if they sometimes agree, or "0" if they almost never agree with the statement. When you finish reading all nine statements, have them total up their points. Discuss the questions and their responses. Were they surprised at their score? Have them compare their results with the statement they wrote about their listening skills, and discuss any disparity between them.

Ask students to pick one statement on which they answered 0 or 1 and concentrate on improving that listening behavior for one week. At the end of the week, ask students to write a journal entry about how hard it was to change this behavior.

LISTENING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I sit up straight and face the speaker.
2. I remove all unnecessary items from my desktop before the speaker begins.
3. I avoid looking at others in the class during the speech.
4. I try to think of how the new information relates to what I already know about the subject.
5. I try to visualize what the speaker describes.
6. I make notes of any questions I want to ask after the speaker finishes.
7. I don't interrupt or talk to others while the speaker or another student is talking to the class.
8. I wait patiently until I am allowed to ask questions of the speaker.
9. I ask questions that will increase my understanding of the subject.

Scoring

15–18 "Ears" to you—you're a first-class listener!

10–14 Better stay tuned: You may be missing something important.

0–9 Listen up!

#73

Simple Things to Do

Listen Up

Background

Making good listening into a game encourages even the most reluctant student to get actively involved. Games generate a type of excitement not usually found in more conventional lessons. Such activities are especially beneficial after a long, silent written exercise, for students can talk without causing unwanted disruptions in the class.

Activity

Begin this listening chain with the phrase, "I went to the mall and bought . . . ," completing the sentence with the item purchased. Call on students randomly, and more than one time, challenging them to add their "purchases" to the existing shopping list, repeating aloud each item mentioned to that point in the game and in the correct order. Continue around the room until the chain is broken when someone is unable to repeat the sequence of items in the proper order. Allow the entire class to keep track, letting anyone who makes a mistake know about it right away, or appoint a designated listener to keep track of the items purchased.

Variation

Tailor this activity to particular units of study by altering the opening phrase: I drove across America and visited *name of city;* I went to the museum and saw *type of exhibit*, and so on.

#74

Simple Things to Do

Alphabet Soup

Background

One of the most effective ways to organize auditory material is to listen for a definite pattern in the words or phrases. A group of words strung together is easier to recall if some organizer such as alphabetical order is included. This strategy works in many listening games, such as this activity where students play a round-robin–style game by using an alphabetical or numerical sequence.

Activity

Select a category—in this example, it's grocery shopping—then introduce the listening chain with a statement containing a word that fits in the category and begins with the letter A: I went to the grocery store and bought an apple. Call on students randomly, and more than one time, if possible, challenging them to continue the chain by adding a word that fits in the category and begins with the letter B, then C, and so on. Each student must first repeat the earlier words in the sequence: apple, broccoli, carrots, doughnuts, eggs, fish, and so on. Continue the game until you reach the letter Z or the chain is broken when a student is unable to repeat the proper sequence of items.

Teacher Tip

The alphabetic sequence of this game makes it ideal for primary grade students.

Category Ideas

animals
colors
foods
feelings
clothing
compound words
careers
school supplies
story characters
famous places
first names
vehicles

#75

Things That Take Effort

Taking Note

Background

Like any skill, note-taking improves with time and practice. But a number of quick and easy strategies can make even well-organized notes a little better. Post the following strategies in the classroom or photocopy them for students to tape to their notebooks. Leave a few blank lines for students to write some of their personal note-taking strategies.

Have students focus on one or two of the following strategies at first, incorporating others as they feel comfortable with the initial techniques. Then they can pick the ones that work best for them and refine them. They'll see a big change in their notes and an even bigger improvement in their test scores!

Activity

Consider holding a class discussion on study techniques. Some techniques a few students use might help other students. Also, remind students to highlight key concepts or terms only. Highlighting too much defeats the purpose. Reinforce this important tip during note-taking modeling sessions.

- Title and date each lecture for future reference.
- Look directly at the speaker.
- Write one idea or concept per line.
- Double space your notes so you can make additions later.
- Review your notes before and after class to refresh your memory about the topic.
- With a colored marker or highlighting pen, highlight main ideas *only* for reviewing purposes.
- Never abbreviate key concepts or vocabulary terms.
- Complete reading assignments before class so lecture notes mean more to you.
- Write questions you have for the speaker in the margin, then ask them during breaks in or at the conclusion of a lecture.
- Write down *all* information the speaker writes on the board.

#76

Things That Take Effort

Cornell Note-Taking System

Background

The Cornell Note-Taking System (Pauk 1974) consists of five separate tasks organized in a pattern to maximize long-term concept retention. Students can learn the technique in a few hours, and teachers can incorporate it easily into existing classroom study programs. The system is designed to provide specific study strategies for a variety of alternate style learners.

Activity

The Cornell System helps students keep notes organized during the lecture and, later, during periodic review sessions. It consists of the following five tasks:

RECORD notes on the right two-thirds of the notebook page.

REDUCE information after the lecture, condensing concepts to one- or two-word phrases in the **RECALL** column (one-third of left side of page).

RECITE, concealing the note-taking **(RECORD)** column, as much as the student can remember, using the abbreviated **RECALL** column prompts.

REFLECT on the information as a whole and on how it relates to what the student already knows about the topic.

REVIEW at regular intervals (not just before exams), using the **RECITE** method, immediately after class to reinforce the written notes, and at other times before formal testing situations.

#77

For
the
Committed

Note-Taking Tips for Educators

Background

In addition to modeling good note-taking behaviors, teachers can help students get the most out of the note-taking experience in a number of ways. These techniques require some commitment on the part of the teacher, but the end result benefits everyone involved.

Activity

Review some of these techniques before a unit of study, selecting those areas that are appropriate for specific subject areas.

- Title lectures to help students focus on the main idea.
- Announce at the beginning of the unit of study the type of test you'll give so students can organize their notes in the most efficient manner possible. For example, for true-false or multiple choice tests, which involve recall, notes may be

simple, one-line statements, while notes to prepare for an essay test require more supporting details and links to related information.

- Write clearly and spell correctly.
- Slow down when discussing important information.
- Write essential terms, dates, and the like on the board. Never abbreviate these essentials.
- Relate the new information to what students already know about the topic.
- Ask questions during the lecture to reinforce student purpose for listening and understanding as well as to promote active involvement.
- Pause to respond to student questions and concerns at regular intervals during the lecture.
- Avoid giving too much essential information at one time; in other words, do not lecture for an entire class period.
- When a lot of note-taking is unavoidable, copy a handout with essential data, leaving space for students to write additional information from the lecture on the same sheet.

#78

For the Committed

Notes in the Learning Process

Background

Give note-taking skills the same emphasis as prereading or writing activities. Stress to students that when they review their notes, they ask themselves the same types of questions they did in prereading activities; primarily, how does the information they have gathered in their notes fit into what they already know about the topic? Asking questions is an excellent way for students to grasp the material and highlight any areas that need reinforcement or remediation. Questions serve to focus their purpose which, as in the case of reading, increases their comprehension.

Activity

The following questions are designed to help students determine how much they know about the material covered in their notes. Add additional questions specific to the topic. Practice answering the questions together as a class. Alternatively, have students review their notes, then jot down a question they still have on the topic. Answer the questions in class, with students making the necessary additions or corrections to their notes.

- What are three key vocabulary terms, and what does each word mean?
- List three ways this information affects your daily life.
- What group of people (career, culture, age group) would benefit most from this information?
- What inventions might be possible because of this information? What present-day conveniences relied on this information to be built?
- How does this information relate to what you already know about the topic?
- Who would most likely use this information on a regular basis?
- What place(s) could you visit to learn more about this topic?
- Why do you think this information is studied in your grade?
- What else would you like to know about this topic?

SECTION 6

Vocabulary Builders

One's vocabulary needs constant fertilizing or it will die.

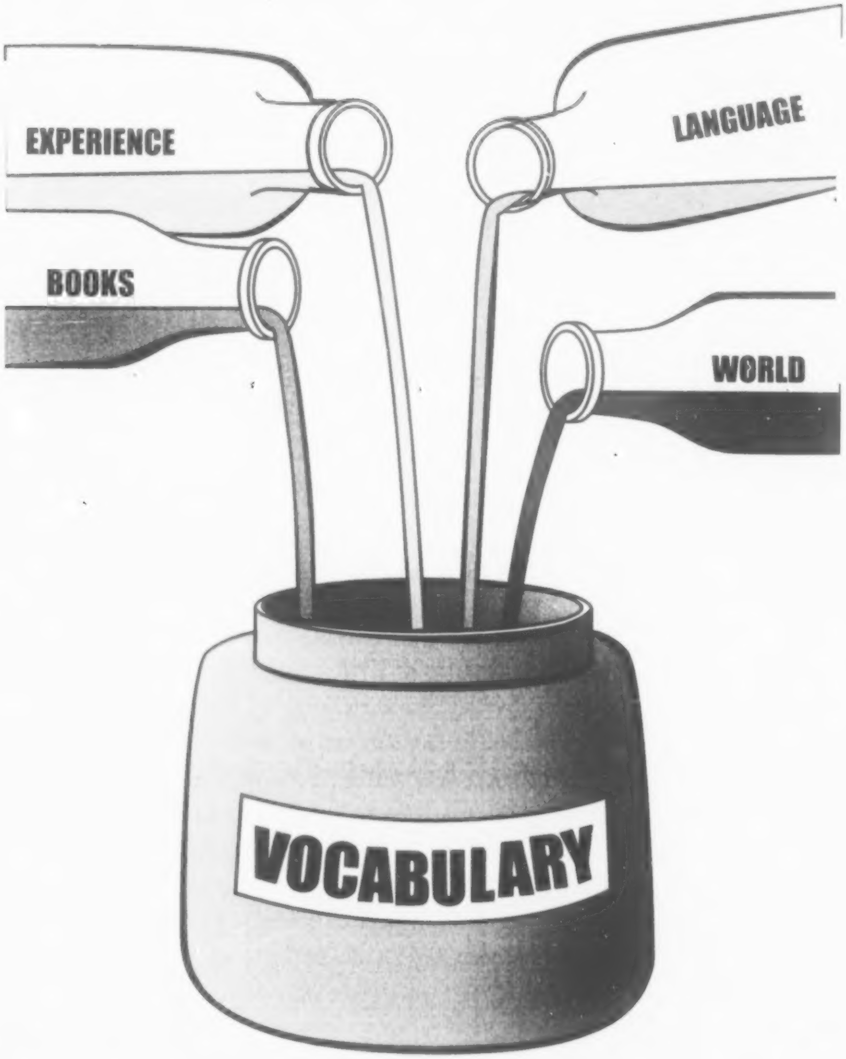
—Evelyn Waugh

Learners possess four distinctive, yet overlapping, vocabularies: a listening vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, reading vocabulary, and writing vocabulary. The largest of these, the listening vocabulary, includes words whose spelling may be unknown to the listener and whose exact meaning might be apparent only through the use of context cues. A student employing effective deductive strategies could possess an almost limitless listening vocabulary.

Words contained in speaking vocabulary are those the student can use accurately in conversation. While students need not know the spelling of the term, they must know its definition and how to use the word appropriately in a sentence.

Considerably smaller than the listening and speaking vocabularies is a reading vocabulary, confined to words one can recognize in print. The smallest of the four vocabularies, the writing vocabulary, comprises only those words whose spelling, meaning, and usage students know.

The goal of any vocabulary development program is to reduce the disparity between the listening and writing vocabularies.


EXPERIENCE
LANGUAGE
BOOKS
WORLD
VOCABULARY

#79

Simple Things to Do

Tongue Twisters

Background

Word puzzles are a great way to get students excited about developing their vocabularies because these exercises are easy to understand and rooted in humor. Even the most reluctant learner cannot resist the challenge of figuring out the puzzle before anyone else. Puzzles and riddles provide a painless way to reinforce the concepts presented in class.

Activity

Homophones are words that sound alike but have different meanings. Have students try to guess the homophone pairs in each phrase either working alone or as a class.

Teacher Tip

After students have completed enough of these riddles in class, either individually or as a group, challenge them to come up with their own homophone pairs. Have them write the riddles on cards and let the class try to solve them.

Example Riddles	**Answers**
Rabbit fur	hare hair
Sweet Bambi	dear deer
Motionless writing paper	stationary stationery
An arrogant blood vessel	vain vein
Undecorated aircraft	plain plane
The entire cavity	whole hole
Tired vegetable	beat beet
Assistance for assistants	aids aides
Dessert for a caribou	moose mousse
60 minutes we spend together	our hour
Window glass discomfort	pane pain
Letters for boys and men	male mail
To encounter salami	meet meat
A sailor's belly button	naval navel
Baby antelope	new gnu
Naked cub	bare bear
Advice from a panel of experts	council counsel
The story of a dog's wagger	tail tale
A single person triumphed	one won
A wobbly seven days	weak week
Fee levied on hardware equipment	tacks tax
A bargain event of boat equipment	sail sale
Authentic fishing gear	real reel
Smart money	cents sense
An amazing stunt at the end of your legs	feet feat
A just fee	fair fare
A stallion with a sore throat	hoarse horse
Cornflakes continuing story	cereal serial
Money for Bambi's mother	doe dough
A waterway that's not crooked	straight strait
Drink for golfing equipment	tee tea
Disinterested wood plank	bored board
Female relative of a bug	ant aunt
To view a large body of water	see sea
Constructed by the housekeeper	maid made
Go ahead and stitch	so sew

#80

Simple Things to Do

Ginonym

Background

A card game already familiar to students is an excellent foundation for constructing new vocabulary development activities. The games can focus on any one aspect of language such as compound words, affixes, and so on and be built around the rules of Hearts, Rummy, Go Fish, or Old Maid. For an added challenge, have students create the decks themselves. After writing the words on one side, they can draw the same picture on the back of every card in that deck. Have students work in groups of three to four to create the decks. At the end of the year, raffle off the decks, and repeat the process with a new group of students the next school year.

Activity

Two to four students can play this variation of Gin Rummy, which involves synonyms and antonyms. Have students create a deck in multiples of three, using a pattern that offers a synonym and antonym for the same word. Some examples are Over–Above–Below, Huge–Big–Small, Complete–Entire–Partial, and Slim–Narrow–Wide.

The dealer deals each player five cards, then places the remaining cards in the middle of the table. Players draw and discard as they attempt to make synonym pairs (1 point) and antonym pairs (2 points) with their cards. Players wishing to take a card from the discard pile that is not on top of the stack must also collect any cards discarded after the desired card. Since synonym pairs are worth fewer points than antonym pairs, players may want to wait until they can make antonym pairs, but since only the winner's points are tallied, they must decide which choice to make. Play continues until one player reaches 25 points. As in rummy, players can lay down an antonym to go with another player's synonym cards or vice versa.

Teacher Tip

Consider laminating the cards for longer wear.

Materials

- Index cards
- Drawing utensils (optional)

#81

Simple Things to Do

Compound Rummy

Background

Student-created decks of word-play cards accomplish a number of classroom objectives. They provide highly stimulating drill practice for language concepts, and, because students actually create the cards, they involve students in more than one phase of the learning process. Creating room supplies such as the cards gives them a feeling of ownership, which makes the items and their use that much more appealing and motivating to students.

Activity

Have students create a deck of compound words, separating each word onto two cards. For example, using the compound word *railroad, rail* would appear on one card and *road* on the second card. Place students in groups of no more than six players. Make sure each deck contains no fewer than thirty pairs of compound words.

With students in groups of three to five players, have them appoint a dealer who distributes five cards to each player, then places the next card face-up on the table. Players, in turn, draw and discard one card, attempting to form compound words that they display in front of them. As in traditional rummy, they may choose to use the face-up card on the discard pile instead of drawing from the deck. Players wishing to use a card on the discard pile that is not on the top of the stack must also collect any cards discarded after the desired card. Play continues until one player uses all his or her cards to form compound words. If no player can accomplish this by the time the last card is drawn, the player with the most compound words wins that round.

Enrichment

To add an informal evaluation to the activity, have each student provide a brief definition of the compound word before he or she receives points for the match.

Materials

- Index cards
- Drawing utensils (optional)

#82

Things That Take Effort

STACK

Background

Games are among the most useful tools in vocabulary development exercises because they can be constructed and adapted for virtually every unit of study. The rules remain the same, but the content of each set of cards is suited to a specific subject area. These activities provide excellent reinforcement of vocabulary terms introduced in science and social studies classes and are a lively method of test review.

Activity

Create this game with blank BINGO cards and any five-letter word.

Distribute blank BINGO cards generated on a computer or hand-drawn by students, then announce the five-letter word they should print across the top of their card. For example, have them write S T A C K.

Designate a category for each horizontal row, and have students write words from that category that begin with the letter listed at the top of the column. For example, if the first category is "Animals," they might complete the first row of their STACK card with the words Snake, Tiger, Ape, Cat, Kangaroo. Repeat the process with four more categories for each card. Leave a free space in the center of the card.

Begin calling on students to volunteer the words they listed for each of the categories from their cards. If anyone else in the room shares that word, they must ALL cover that word on their cards. Continue the game with students sharing words from their cards, and classmates with corresponding responses covering those spaces/words on their STACK cards.

The object of STACK is to think of words for each category that no other students will have on their card. When all students have read their responses, the winner is the student who has a straight line, diagonal, or four corners containing responses that no one else in the room shares or the student with the most uncovered spaces on his or her card.

Enrichment

Discuss with students which categories were hardest to fill and why they think this was the case. To add the element of informal evaluation, have winners give a brief definition of the words left uncovered.

Materials

- Blank BINGO cards, computer- or student-made

#83

Things That Take Effort

Compound Dominoes

Background

One of the many benefits of using games in the classroom is that students have an opportunity to interact with one another beyond just lunchtime and recess, which enables them to experience a different form of communication with their peers. For example, when they work in groups to construct the games, they are developing valuable cooperative skills. And the game-playing process itself fosters good sportsmanship.

Activity

Have students create a deck of compound words (or start with the deck created in Activity #81), separating each word onto two cards. For example, with the word *lifestyle, life* appears on one card and *style* on another. Make sure each deck contains no fewer than thirty pairs of compound words plus a blank card for each student in the class. With students in groups of three to four, have one student deal each person seven word cards and one blank card, then turn up one card to begin the word chain. If the first player cannot add to the beginning or end of that card to form a compound word, the player must draw a card from the deck. Players may also choose to use their blank card as a wild card to supply a response.

The game continues as players either add onto the existing chain or draw a card from the deck. Players do not have to lay a card down with each draw; if they can't add onto the chain, they keep collecting cards. The word chain continues until one player uses all his or her cards. Sample word chains are *day-light-house-boat-man* (daylight, lighthouse, houseboat, boatman) and *waste-basket-ball-room-mate* (wastebasket, basketball, ballroom, roommate).

Materials

- Index cards
- Drawing utensils (optional)

#84

Things
That
Take
Effort

Compound Interest

Background

Activities that allow students to move around the room help them release some of the energy that builds up after a morning or afternoon of seat work. Such activities provide a productive outlet for this need to move that sends students to the pencil sharpener several times a day. These activities work particularly well for kinesthetic learners, students who function best when engaged in some kind of movement.

Activity

First as a class, create a list of compound words. A good number is at least twice as many words as students in the class so students can find lots of matches. Then have students print a deck of cards containing the compound words, separating each word onto two cards; for example *wallpaper* would appear on two cards as *wall* and *paper*.

Have each student take one card—half of a compound word—from the deck. Give students five to ten minutes to circulate among classmates to find any words that, when combined with their card, form a compound word. Instruct them to turn their card over and write those words in a column on the left side of the card. After they return to their seats, challenge students to think of three more words to combine with the word on their card to make more compound words. Have them write those words in a column on the right-hand side of the back of their card.

Have students share their words with the class in a postactivity discussion. Did the placement of their half of the compound word have any effect on its meaning such as in *light*house and day*light*? Can the same be said of the words that appear on the list they generated in the right column?

Materials

- Index cards

#85

For
the
Committed

Word Webs

Background

Webs are a good tool to determine how much students already know about words. They are particularly useful at the start of a new unit of study where assessing student background knowledge directs the course of instruction.

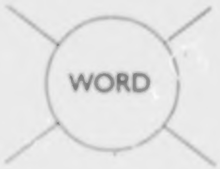
Write a vocabulary word in the center of the web, surrounding it with several questions and statements such as those on the following page. With students in small groups or as a class, have them brainstorm ideas to respond to the questions and statements. In the case of small group webbing, pool the results of each group's findings to create a class profile of prior experience.

Activity

Words may be classified in a number of ways. The webbing questions and statements that follow help determine students' knowledge of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Use similar webbing exercises with affixes, definitions, and other word groups or parts of speech.

Noun Web

Insert noun in the blank space for each question:



How do you make ____?

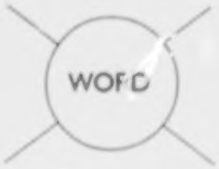
Where can you find ____?

When should you use ___?

Why would you want/need ____?

Verb Web

Insert verb in the blank space for each question.



Who knows how to ___?

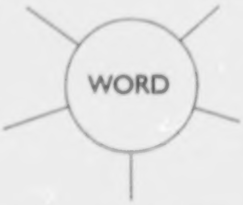
Where can you ____?

Why do people want/need to ___?

What do you need in order to ___?

Adjective Web

Insert adjective in the blank space for each statement.



Name things that are ___.

Name ways to become ___.

Describe ways to avoid being ___.

List words that mean the same as ___.

List words that mean the opposite of ___.

SkyLight Training and Publishing Inc.

#86

For the Committed

Word Sort

Background

Recognizing the categories in which words fit such as describer, action, naming, and so on requires a solid understanding of what the word means, including its multiple definitions. The word *seed*, for example, has a number of definitions. While *seed* would fit appropriately into a discussion of farming, it would also fit into a discussion of team or player ranking in sports.

Students are often confused about how to classify multiple-definition words. An exercise that asks students to examine a word's various functions allows teachers to see the thought processes students use to classify vocabulary.

Activity

Place students in groups of three to five, and provide each group with eighteen to twenty-five word (index) cards depending on the group's ability, a transparency sheet, and an overhead marker. Generate the lists of words from texts used in class or from student writing. Ask each group to sort the words into categories, creating the categories through group discussion. For example, they might group the words *playful, beach,* and *hotel* under a heading **Vacation**. Tell them to avoid such labels as "number of letters or syllables" that reflect no real understanding of the word. Remind students to examine the words for their relationship to one another as well as their function and/or meaning. Each category must have at least two words, and words may appear in only one category.

Have them write the list of categories on the transparency sheet, then appoint a group spokesperson to share results with the class.

Teacher Tip

Students with a more tenuous grasp of the word's meaning will stick with simple headings such as "descriptive words" or "naming words," while students who have a clear idea of the word's meaning can place it under a more complex heading such as "feelings people have" or "objects that are tools."

This activity works equally well if all groups have the same set of words or if each group has a different set. To avoid having one group member monopolize the creation of categories, tell the groups that each student must create one category.

Materials

- Index cards
- Transparency sheets
- Overhead markers

#87

For the Committed

Grid Builders

Background

An effective way to categorize words is through their connotation or the characteristics implied in their definition. For example, the word *building* immediately conjures an image of something very different from a *house*, although both are freestanding structures. Categorizing words involves comparing them, analyzing their specific characteristics. A semantic feature analysis grid (Baldwin, Ford, Readance 1981) is a good graphic organizer for helping learners see relationships among words and ideas.

Before beginning a new unit of study, select a number of vocabulary terms that will appear in the unit, and create a large graph. List the words on the vertical lines of the grid.

Activity

With students working in pairs or triads, have them brainstorm for traits possessed by some of the words on the vertical line, and place these traits on the horizontal lines. For example, if the discussion is about housing, and the vertical lines list types of buildings such as apartments, single-family homes, and condominiums, students might list such features as size, use, and location on the horizontal lines. Then returning to the vertical list, tell students to mark a "+" in the blocks where the word possesses the trait, a "–" in the blocks where the word does not possess the trait, and an "0" when the word could possess the trait.

	for living	working place	large	many rooms	made of brick or wood	stand alone	has windows	basement
house	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	0
tent	+	–	–	0	–	+	0	–
school	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
hospital	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
factory	–	+	+	0	+	+	+	0
apartment	+	0	–	–	+	–	+	0
igloo	+	–	–	–	–	+	0	–

After they complete the grid, ask them to discuss their findings and respond to the following questions: Which words seem closest in function? Which are the furthest in meaning from one another? Could these words be classified as synonyms or antonyms of one another? Why do they say that?

Materials

- Drawing paper or computer-generated graph paper

#88

For the Committed

Sniglets

Background

Sniglets are imaginative words that the dictionary "forgot" to include. Composed of "spare parts," such as affixes of existing words, they draw their unique definitions from these components. There are few more exciting ways to reinforce the meanings of various affixes and shorter words than to invite students to create their own sniglets.

Sample Sniglets

spongable	describes any object that can soak up moisture *The spongable newspaper made the spilled milk disappear.*
munchload	amount of snack food one can carry from the kitchen in a single trip *Dad can make the biggest munchload since he has the largest hands.*
pouncewhack	what a trampoline does when it snaps back into place against your body *Josh got pouncewhacked by the trampoline when he fell forward onto it.*

chuggling	the noise a kitty makes coughing up a hairball *Our long-haired cat, Princess, is chuggling more since it's summertime.*

Activity

Create a few sniglets together as a class by thinking about some object (the top of the foot?) or activity (practicing the trampoline on a bed?) that the dictionary neglected to include. Add prefixes or suffixes to the word to denote its tense or part of speech, and use the sniglet in a sentence. Then challenge the class to come up with three facts they know about the sniglet as in the following example.

The new puppy *toefummeled* across the slippery kitchen floor.

1. *Toefummeled* is a past tense word.
2. It's easier to *toefummel* on wet surfaces.
3. *Toefummeling* can be done indoors.

Have students work in pairs or triads to create their own sniglet and use it in a sentence. Have students read their sentences aloud, with their classmates coming up with the three sniglet facts. Then have students guess the meaning of the sniglets based on the familiar word parts [illegible] sniglets contain.

Enrichment

Have students draw pictures of their sniglets and display them on a classroom bulletin board.

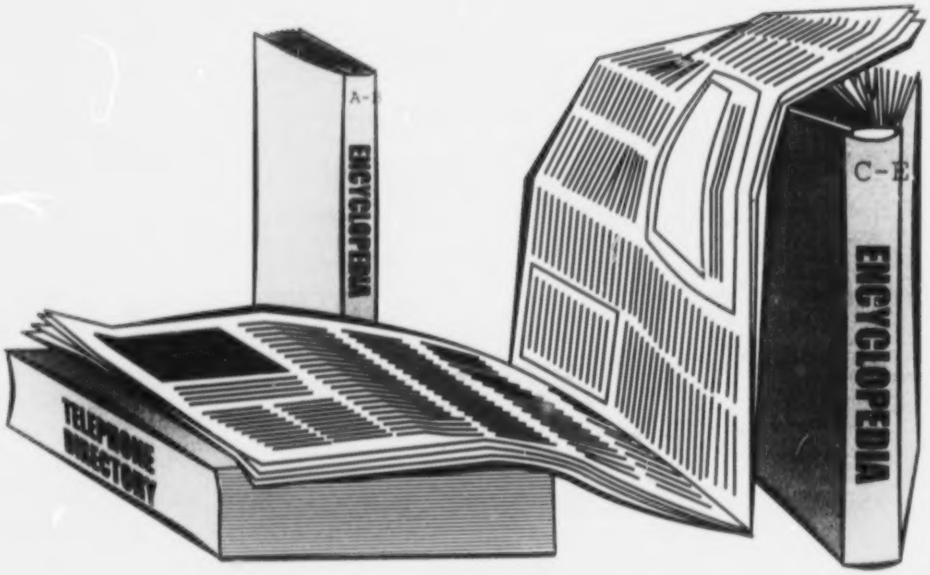
SECTION 7

Exploring Resources

> *A little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle.*
>
> —Kahlil Gibran

Using reference materials effectively requires the development of different skills from those needed to read fiction or expository text. Because the primary purpose of reference texts is information gathering, in most cases specific facts or records, meaningful practice exercises give students opportunities to locate facts in these materials by using one of the built-in tools such as the index and table of contents.

Students will encounter reference materials in their lives beyond the classroom. Developing effective strategies now will serve them in their adult lives as well.


A-B
ENCYCLOPEDIA
C-E
ENCYCLOPEDIA
TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

#89

Simple Things to Do

Guiding the Way

(Dictionary)

Background

To become proficient in using reference materials, students must know how to use the tools within these resources to assist them in their information-gathering efforts. The most effective way to introduce these tools, such as dictionary guide words and tables of contents, is to identify them and use them in material students know and understand as a foundation for the new material.

Activity

Assign ten students to print their surnames on pieces of posterboard. Randomly select two of them to act as guide words. Guide words are the pair of words at the top of a dictionary page that indicate that all words on that page are, alphabetically, between these two words. Have each of the remaining eight students take turns standing between the guide words, and ask the class to tell which surname belongs there.

Assign a new group of ten students to print any noun, verb, adjective, or other part of speech on posterboard. Randomly select two new student guide words from this group, and repeat the process of having the other students stand between them to see if their word fits there. Assign a third group of ten students a letter of the alphabet, and tell them to print a word beginning with that letter on their posterboard. Repeat the process again. This step simulates how real dictionary guide words work.

Enrichment

After the third group has completed its task, ask students to arrange the words (and the students holding them) alphabetically, and provide a word that fits between each set of words—between students 1 and 2, students 2 and 3, and so on.

Teacher Tip

For the first part of the activity, select students with surnames far enough apart alphabetically to ensure that other names fall between them.

Materials

- Posterboard

#90

Simple Things to Do

Drawing a Blank

(Newspaper)

Background

When mature readers come to an unfamiliar term in their reading, they try to determine its meaning based on context. In a variation of this practice, if the unfamiliar word is removed, readers should be able to make sufficient sense of the sentence so they can substitute an appropriate word in the space to complete the thought.

Activity

Distribute copies of a news story, blotting out every seventh or eighth word. (Alternately, retype the story, replacing every seventh or eighth word with a blank line.) Avoid blotting out proper names or titles. Instruct students to read the passage completely, then reread it, filling in the blank spaces with words they think make sense. Hand out copies of the original article or display it on an overhead, and have students compare their substitutions with the original article. Discuss whether their words have changed the author's meaning.

Teacher Tip

To encourage students to look at the whole article for ideas on what the missing words may be, discuss noun markers (*the, a, an*) and affixes (*ing* and *ed*, to name just two) that offer clues.

Materials

- Newspapers

#91

Things That Take Effort

Squeeze Play

(Dictionary)

Background

Many students have gotten into the practice of leafing aimlessly through the dictionary in search of a word. While they may understand the concept of alphabetical order, they experience some confusion about how the words within a single letter are arranged.

Activities that ask students to manipulate guide words take two forms: they require students to classify words by stating between which set of guide words they appear, or they require them to generate lists of words that might appear between any two designated guide words. Using both methods allows students to view the process from two perspectives, an ideal arrangement for alternate style learners.

Activity

Divide the class into two teams, asking each team to supply one word with the same initial letter (sad—silly). To earn a point, each team must supply a word that fits between those guide words (sad—sat—seem—silly). Eliminate the original guide words, replacing them with the two new words before repeating the process (sat—sea—seed—seem). Repeat the process of eliminating and creating new guide words until one team is unable to supply a word that fits correctly between the guide words. The remaining team must then supply one more word to win that round.

Materials

- Large index cards or typing paper

#92

Things That Take Effort

Scavenger Hunt

(Telephone Directory)

Background

Teaching students how to use the telephone directory involves getting them familiar with its format (alphabetical order, guide words, subject classification, etc.) through activities that illustrate the impact of this reference guide in their daily lives. Locating their best friend's name, address, and telephone number is often where most students stop working with this valuable resource. Getting students to use the book regularly instead of constantly calling for directory assistance will provide them with a "life skill" that will serve them far beyond the classroom.

Activity

Have students work individually or in pairs, using the telephone directory to respond to questions such as the following:

- On what page does your phone number appear?
- What are the guide words for that page?

- How many other people share your surname?
- Are there any spelling variations of your surname? How many? What are they?
- List three streets that share your zip code.
- Name the grocery store nearest your home.
- How many florists are listed in this directory?
- List three headings under which you could find stores that sell computers.
- Find a large ad—at least one-fourth of the page—for a restaurant, and list five facts the ad tells you.
- What communities does your phone directory serve?
- On what page does the listing for your school appear?
- What is your school's address? phone number?
- How many telephone numbers does your school have?
- Into how many sections is your directory separated? Name them.
- How are the names in the telephone directory arranged?

Materials

- Local telephone directories

#93

Things That Take Effort

Who's First?

(Telephone Directory)

Background

Putting proper names in correct sequence employs different rules than conventional alphabetizing. Attention is given first to initials versus full names, apostrophes and ampersands are considered, and in some cases, numbers are added to the mix.

The best place to look for such examples is the commerce section of the telephone directory. In this section where businesses are listed in a category apart from private residences, students can analyze the rules of this ordering system.

Activity

Have students select a particular business, for example, furnace/air conditioning repair or women's apparel, that has at least ten entries, and write, on separate index cards, the names of the merchants listed under this heading. Then ask students to switch decks of cards with their nearest neighbor. Give students three to four minutes to order their pile of cards before confirming their work with the telephone directory. Discuss some of the incorrect responses. Why did they choose this order? What cases did they encounter here that were not in the residential section of the book, such as numbers, ampersands, and the like.

Teacher Tip

Use telephone directories from a large metropolitan area to ensure a sufficient quantity of businesses. A great place to get discarded phone directories is the local library. The staff will save last year's editions from all over the country if asked ahead of time.

Materials

- Telephone directories

#94

Things That Take Effort

How Much?

(Encyclopedia)

Background

Many students are unaware of how much and what kind of information is available to them in an encyclopedia. They envision each volume as a "really big" dictionary with an involved definition and some illustrations. In addition to providing a wealth of knowledge on a wide range of subjects, the encyclopedia is an ideal place to search for information that allows students to compare concepts they encounter in their subject area texts.

Activity

Specify a category, such as animals or transportation, and ask students to write, on index cards, several words that fit into that classification. Collect the cards. Divide students into pairs, and give them two cards. Write a list of eight to ten adjectives on the board, such as *big, long, young, tall, high,* and so on, and invite students to use the encyclopedia to determine which of the words on their two cards is bigger, longer, younger, taller, and higher. Have each student jot down their responses, along with a volume and page number to verify their claim.

Teacher Tip

The most organized method of searching in pairs is to have each team member focus on one word. For example, if the pair receives the words *tiger* and *elephant*, one member finds all he can about tigers while his partner finds all she can about elephants. Then in the second half of the activity, they can compare what they learned to determine which is bigger, taller, and so on.

Materials

- Index cards

#95

Things That Take Effort

Class(ified) Act

(Newspaper)

Background

One of the best examples of an index found in daily life is the classified section of the newspaper. Here, items for sale are separated from lost and found notices and job listings by a numbered guide that simplifies the search through what can be a massive list. As students become interested in buying and selling articles or in part-time employment, they will need to know how to use this essential resource.

Activity

Provide students with copies of the classified ads section of a large metropolitan newspaper and a list of items, such as cars, motorcycles, homes, and so on, they might find there. Instruct students to look through the classified ad index and indicate the number of the section where each item is found; for example, trucks might appear under #192—Vehicles for Sale.

Have students look at the index and brainstorm for at least two specific items that might appear in each section; for example, #130—Instruments for Sale might include a guitar and a piano.

Variation

To demonstrate how much more efficiently one can locate information when it is grouped by categories, create a "cut and paste" classified ad section, placing the items randomly with no order or classification. Then ask students to locate several items in this section. Because they must search through every ad to locate the items, they will appreciate the ease of locating items when they work with a real, organized, classified section.

Materials

- Newspaper classified ads

#96

Things That Take Effort

Goin' to the Game

(Map Skills–Atlas)

Background

Map skills are necessary outside the classroom, but many students have no idea how to read a map and no concept of scale, believing that based on their proximity on a map, they can travel from New York city to Chicago on their lunch hour.

Maps follow the typical, alphabetical arrangement of most other reference materials. Show students how to use map indicators printed in letters and numbers on the vertical and horizontal edges of the map or a compass rose to locate specific places and make statements about their relationship to other locations.

Activity

Students are more likely to get actively involved in an exercise if the topic is something they enjoy such as sports. Below are sample questions for a map skills activity students can complete individually or in pairs.

Use a map of North America to locate these answers.

- In what state do the Boston Celtics play their home games?
- If the Chicago Bears travel to their state's capital to receive an award from the governor, in what city will the ceremony take place?
- Which ocean is closer to the Seattle Mariners' home field?
- In which state do the San Francisco Giants and San Diego Padres play their home games?
- Name four states whose citizens might be New England Patriots fans.
- Many games are played at Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh. Name the three rivers.
- If the Green Bay Packers are scheduled to meet the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl, which team will travel the farthest to the game site in New Orleans?

Materials

- Map of North America

#97

For the Committed

Guide Word Rummy

(Dictionary)

Background

Card games and worksheets that drill students on the correct use of guide words may set out to accomplish the same task, but the card game clearly has the advantage, not only in the area of built-in student motivation, but in providing a situation, one of playing cards with classmates during the school day, that beckons students to return for more practice. They become more proficient with guide words simply because they are investing more time working with them. In addition, students make choices on a strictly visual basis—a more realistic setting.

Activity

Create a list of thirty to fifty words beginning with the same letter (city, cell, cat, cost, etc.), and have students construct several decks of cards with one word on each card. Divide the class into groups of four to five students, giving each group its own deck of cards. Designate a dealer for each group who distributes five cards to each player, then deals the next two cards face up on the table—these are the guide words. To win, a player must hold five cards that fit correctly between those two guide words, discarding all those words that do not fit. Players, in turn, draw and discard to build a winning hand. If no winner is declared by the end of the deck, players keep their cards, and the dealer reshuffles the deck and draws two new guide words. Play resumes with the new guide words. Players repeat this process until a winner is declared.

Materials

- Index cards

#98

For the Committed

What's This?

(Encyclopedia)

Background

Most of students' encounters with the encyclopedia are strictly work-related as they gather information for an oral or written report. Often, they are left with a less than favorable impression of the reference material. By participating in activities that show them the fascinating worlds that await them in each volume, students are more likely to return to the encyclopedia on pleasure, as well as strictly business, "trips."

Activity

Develop a group of questions students can answer using the encyclopedia and give each student, or pair of students, a question. For added excitement, offer a reward to the first student or two-person team who can find the answer to the question, citing the volume(s) in which the student or team located the information. Once students become more proficient at this exercise, encourage them to make up questions for the activity.

Here are some sample questions to get started.

- When was the last time you *masticated?*
- Would you rather eat *lichens* or *legumes?*
- Are you *laconic* or *gregarious?*
- What does an *ichthyologist* do?
- When do people *matriculate?*
- What does an *alias* conceal?
- Why can't a *ptarmigan* take a *polygraph* test?
- Who's taller than a *dulcimer?*
- What's the opposite of *unilateral?*
- Where can you find *ambergris?*
- Do you wear a *surplice* or eat it?

Materials

- Set of encyclopedias

#99

For the Committed

What's Cookin'?

(Newspaper)

Background

Many children (and adults) begin and end their daily newspaper reading with the sports section and the comics. Meanwhile, the rest of the publication remains a largely untapped resource for everything from using an index to recognizing the importance of proper sequencing. The daily newspaper offers practical applications for skills taught in the classroom.

Activity

Cut out a recipe from the newspaper's food section, clipping apart the steps but leaving the title and ingredients intact. Instruct students to read over the steps, then arrange them in the proper sequence, conveying in writing or through discussion the reasons for their choice. Where are the ingredients used? Can students identify the reasons for the order of the ingredients list? For example, most often the ingredients are listed in the order they are used in the recipe. Still other recipes list ingredients by quantity; or they may list main ingredients first, spices last; or some even list all moist ingredients first, dry ingredients last. Why do they think the recipe's creator chose the particular order used in that recipe?

For an added challenge, slip in an unrelated step from another recipe to test students' ability to identify those items not included in their recipe. The unnecessary step might contain an ingredient not listed in their recipe.

Enrichment

After students have correctly sequenced the recipes, arrange to use the school cafeteria to allow students to test their recipe sequence.

Materials

- Recipe from newspaper

#100

For the Committed

On the Road Again

(Map Skills–Atlas)

Background

Most of the maps students encounter in the classroom depict foreign lands they know only through their reading assignments or from some mention of them on the evening news. They often fail to make the connection between this type of map and the type their parents use to find their way on vacation.

Children have a natural curiosity for anything they see used by adults. They also have a vivid imagination and long to roam from familiar territory. By taking advantage of these two aspects of their personalities, teachers can teach effective map skills and foster a lifelong willingness to rely on maps as reference materials.

Activity

Stop by a local AAA office to obtain maps of different states or of the United States. Bring the maps to class and talk about where students would like to visit in the 50 states. Use the maps to plan routes and make travel arrangements. Students may work independently or in pairs to complete the activity.

Have them plan a car trip from one state to another, crossing at least two time zones. Then tell them to use the map to answer questions such as the following about their trip.

You are traveling from (*Name of state*) to (*Name of state*):

- Through which states will you travel? How long will it take traveling by car at 60 miles per hour for 14 hours a day? How many days will you be on the road before you reach your destination?
- Name three cities where you'll stop to eat and sleep.
- What type of land will you experience on the road?
- List any three capital cities along your route.
- List any three tourist attractions you would like to visit along the way.
- If you leave your watch on your time zone, and it reads 4 P.M. when you arrive at your destination, what time is it in the city you're visiting?

Teacher Tip

Before beginning this or any other map activity, design exercises that require students to use a ruler and the map legends to determine the distance between two cities. Do one or two activities together as a class, then proceed with individual or group activities.

Materials

- Maps of the United States or several states

SECTION 8

Testing 1-2-3

The most important part of teaching=to teach what it is to know.

—Simone Weil

Many students perform poorly on tests not because they lack knowledge of the subject matter, but because they lack a basic understanding of how to prepare for and take written tests.

Managing the pretest and testing situations means organizing notes and other study aids effectively, developing practical review strategies, and acquiring test-taking skills. Educators must also find study and testing methods that don't exclude or sabotage the auditory and kinesthetic learners in the class. Flash cards and oral quizzes are only two ways to meet these students' needs. Others are webs and other graphic organizers, peer studying or tutoring, and oral test review.

Teaching these study tools gives each student the opportunity to deliver his or her best test performance—one that displays his or her grasp of the material rather than his or her comfort with the format of the test.

Testing 1-2-3

This section provides a variety of test-taking strategies. Discuss the strategies in class, then post them in the classroom or photocopy them so students can tape them inside their notebooks. Schedule regular test reviews using these methods to promote the strategies.

#101

Simple Things to Do

Getting Ready for Tests

Background

Test preparation begins the instant the teacher introduces a unit of study. It is at that point learners must decide how they will organize information for maximum retention. As test day approaches, if students have been using time and resources wisely all along, they need make only minor adjustments in their daily routine to prepare for the test.

Discuss with students the following strategies for organizing information. Tell them to focus on at least one or two of the strategies each week, adding more as they feel comfortable so the strategies become part of students' regular routines for studying and testing.

Strategies

- Determine what material, such as book, lectures, notes, or video, the test will cover. If the test will focus on information in a text, for example, read, highlight key terms and phrases, and make flash cards from that source. If the test will focus on lecture notes, emphasize organizing information from that source.

- Ask at the onset of a unit of study what test format—matching, essay, true/false—the teacher will use. To take notes for a matching test, list a name or a term followed by several short statements pertaining to it. For an essay test, write supporting details for a main concept.
- Organize notes and other study aids to accommodate the test format. For example, when preparing for a matching test, organize notes in a term/definition format for best study results.
- Try to anticipate from the teacher's questions in class and past tests what questions might appear on the test.
- Use appropriate study tools to review for a test. Flash cards work well to prepare for matching tests, while webbing works to prepare for essay tests.
- Work with a "study buddy," preparing and administering mock questions to one another.
- Review regularly. Having a firm grasp of the information is much better than relying on last minute, late-night cramming.
- Get enough sleep the night before the test.
- Shower rather than bathe the morning of the test. A shower is more invigorating!
- Eat breakfast or lunch before the test.
- Plan a small reward for yourself after the test.

#102

Simple Things to Do

Build a Better Test-Taking Machine

Background

Athletes try to take good care of their bodies—even in the off-season. In this way, they ensure that their transition from semi-idle to full action is a smooth one. Similarly, those students who develop a test-taking perspective view new information as it might appear in the future on a test or quiz. This mentality allows them to hear, then discard, meaningless details, saving space in their retention system for more essential information.

Adopting testing behaviors during the "off-season"—between exams—enables students to spring into full action when testing time arrives, and the "game" is on the line. Developing and maintaining positive study habits throughout the school year makes unproductive cramming before a test unnecessary. Students are ready to apply the following test-taking strategies on test day; they will not feel apprehensive or unprepared.

Strategies

- Arrive on time for the test. If you're anxious or hurried, you won't do well.
- Read the entire test first to familiarize yourself with the information requested.
- Follow all written or oral directions carefully, and don't be afraid to ask for some clarification of the instructions before the test begins.
- Bring a sufficient number of writing instruments to the testing situation, as well as any other materials you might need during the test such as a calculator or scratch paper.
- Write, with teacher permission, all you know about the topic on the back of the test before beginning. This "brain dump" will let you relax and do better.
- Do the easy questions—the ones you know—first.
- Do objective questions before the essay questions. Some facts in the matching or true/false sections may help with writing essays.
- Save answers you're not sure of until the end of the test. Don't spend precious time agonizing over them until you've completed the questions you do know.
- Guess on answers you're not sure of unless you'll be penalized for guessing. You may be storing some subconscious material on the topic and make an educated guess.
- Make sure you've answered every question before handing the test in to the teacher. Check both sides of the paper.

#103

Things That Take Effort

Matchmaker

Background

Matching tests are most commonly used to test such areas as vocabulary, states and capitals, and famous people and their achievements. Based on simple recall, they do not require students to discuss the information in relationship to other concepts in the unit.

This and several other activities in this section suggest using flash cards as a study tool. It's important to note that flash cards must never be used as a shortcut to direct instruction. They are useful study tools only to reinforce concepts already introduced during class lectures and discussion. The most effective method of using flash cards for test review is to provide students with blank cards and markers and have them make the cards. This way, students decide what information to include on the cards as well as what format (name/achievement, term/definition, term/term used in context, etc.) to use.

Strategies

Discuss with students these study tools and demonstrate them in class.

- Use flash cards with the key term or name on one side and corresponding definition or explanation on the back. Study aloud, with a study buddy, creating a sort of game with points to make sure you have a solid grasp of the information.
- On test day, cover the left-hand column and read the right-hand column of the test first, answering as many items as possible without assistance from the left-hand column. If you know the answer, you won't have to waste valuable test time reviewing all the choices.
- On vocabulary quizzes, look for parts of speech in the definition: prefixes and suffixes may hold the key to word meaning.

Materials

- Index cards

#104

Things That Take Effort

Say It Isn't True (or False)

Background

True and false tests measure the learner's recognition of factual statements. Remind students that although, in most cases, statements are phrased as simple declarative sentences, they sometimes contain trick words such as *always* or *never*. Since absolutes rarely exist in the real world, students should keep an eye out for these markers.

Strategies

Discuss these test-taking strategies with students.

- Try listing major topics covered in class, and under each heading, write at least five statements that are true about the topic and five statements that are not true. Study alone for a true/false test: the act of writing the statements will reinforce what you know about the topic.
- On test day, as you read the true/false statement, reduce it to a basic subject/predicate/object

framework for clarity of meaning. For example: Thomas Jefferson, one of the chief architects of the Declaration of Independence and a powerful supporter of independence from the English crown, served as the fourth president before becoming involved in international diplomacy. When you reduce the statement to a simple subject/predicate/object format, the sentence would read *Thomas Jefferson served as the fourth president.* While the other information in the statement is true, the basic sentence is false.

- If all else fails, guess—unless you'll be penalized—since you have a 50–50 chance of choosing correctly.

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#105

Things That Take Effort

Multiplying Your Chances

Background

Discuss the role of multiple choice questions with students. In addition to their use for basic recall of factual material, multiple choice questions often ask the learner to identify relationships that exist among concepts presented in the unit of study. Therefore, the learner's depth of knowledge of the topic must run a little deeper than simple recall. Remind students that once again, it's a good idea to look for absolutes such as *always* or *never* since these absolutes rarely exist in reality.

Strategies

Demonstrate these study strategies in class to help students prepare for their next multiple choice test.

Write test topics on colored index cards. Then on plain white cards, write at least five statements about each topic. Shuffle the white cards and try to place them under the corresponding topic card. This activity works well with a study buddy who can check answers for accuracy. On the back of the cards, write the correct test topic for self-checking after completing the activity.

On test day, read each option, A, B, C, D, of a multiple choice question as a complete statement. Thinking of the statements as a whole thought makes them much easier to understand as in the following sample test question.

The *protagonist* of a story

A. Is always a man

B. Never does anything evil

C. Is usually a sympathetic character

D. Wants to destroy the antagonist

Read the possible responses as follows:

A. The *protagonist* of a story is always a man.

B. The *protagonist* of a story never does anything evil.

C. The *protagonist* of a story is usually a sympathetic character.

D. The *protagonist* of a story wants to destroy the antagonist.

By reading the statements in this form, it becomes clear that C is the logical choice.

Materials

- Colored and white index cards

#106

Things That Take Effort

Fill In the Blank

Background

Some teachers use fill-in-the-blank tests to evaluate the students' grasp of information the teacher feels is essential to understanding a concept or time period. Others use this type of test for vocabulary recall. Discuss with students that when they take this type of test, they must have the information "cold" and be able to recite it without any prompts.

Teachers need to exercise caution when using flash cards in the classroom. To determine correct use, ask the following questions, key factors to appropriate use: Have students gained greater understanding of a concept through use of the cards? Do they represent more than mere rote memorization of data (with the exception of basic math facts)?

Student-constructed cards involve higher order thinking as the learner must make decisions about what to include on the cards and how to organize the information.

Strategies

Demonstrate the following study strategy for fill-in-the-blank tests.

Create flash cards with the key term on one side and definition or explanation on the other. Place the cards term side down on the table and review them, one at a time, trying to supply the correct word for each blank. Working with one or two "study buddies" not only helps but bolsters confidence as well.

On test day, turn the statements into questions for clarity of meaning as in the following sample question. Statement: "John Brown was an important __________ during the Civil War." Rephrase as a question: "What important role did John Brown play during the Civil War?" The missing term is *abolitionist*. Also, look for *a* or *an* to determine if the missing word starts with a vowel or consonant. Read the entire statement to find out which part of speech is requested.

Materials

- Index cards

#107

Things
That
Take
Effort

Easy Essays

Background

Usually reserved for older students, an essay test seeks to determine the depth of understanding of a particular concept or of the relationship between concepts in a unit of study. Many of the questions used in essay tests require higher level thought processes such as analysis, evaluation, and so on, and there is little room for guessing.

Strategies

Practice this strategy in class to help students prepare for an essay test. Remind students of mapping techniques to help them gather ideas to include in their essay.

Write the topic in the center of the board or a piece of paper, then write everything that comes to mind about the topic on the spokes around it. Try to come up with specific examples of applying the knowledge to real situations. As you study, try to relate what you're learning to any information you already know about this topic. For example, if the topic in the center is *Inventions*, write examples of how specific inventions have changed daily living. Studying alone is probably the best route here.

On test day, answer the test's objective questions first to provide some assistance in completing the essay section. Write in complete sentences. As you answer the questions, use as many specific facts and application of those facts as you can recall.

#108

For the Committed

Testing the Tester

Background

Students model the behavior of teachers in ways teachers cannot begin to imagine. If teachers put off making up a test until two or three days before its administration, how can they fault students who study in the same way? If they come to reading groups and writing sessions not totally prepared, what behaviors are students most likely to model?

To create a better testing atmosphere, teachers must take a hard look at their own evaluation behaviors. Teachers who dread a classroom visit from the principal must understand how a class quakes at the sight of a test paper or booklet.

Teachers must organize a curriculum in which tests are a part of, not the end to, a unit of study, thereby creating an environment where students view testing as one of many activities conducted in the classroom. The following are strategies teachers should consider to prepare students for evaluations.

Strategies

- Announce the test format you'll use at the beginning of the unit of study.
- Review note-taking strategies with students on a regular basis.
- Review test-taking strategies with students on a regular basis.
- Schedule some informal study sessions during the year.
- Be certain test items reflect your learning goals and objectives.
- Let students know where you'll get test questions (book, notes, lectures) before they begin the unit of study.
- Include higher level taxonomy questions, but be sure you've worked up to them gradually during the lectures and on tests.
- Avoid overly specific recall questions, which are not really a fair measure of the students' grasp of a concept.
- Allow students to "dump" their brains in writing on the back of the test.
- Plan a low-stress activity after the test.

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There are
one-story intellects,
two-story intellects, and three-story
intellects with skylights. All fact collectors, who
have no aim beyond their facts, are one-story men. Two-story men
compare, reason, generalize, using the labors of the fact collectors as
well as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine,
predict—their best illumination comes from
above, through the skylight.
—Oliver Wendell
Holmes

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Joan F. Groeber

Joan is an instructor at the college of education at Wright State University. She is a former elementary school teacher and currently facilitates teacher workshops for local school districts. Joan specializes in providing accessible ideas for teachers that can be turned into ready-to-use activities for the classroom. Joan has authored several journal articles and is presently completing a young adult mystery novel.

ISBN 1-57517-143-0
90000
9 781575 171432

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